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SEEKING CONVERTS

Mordecai Roshwald

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Allen S. Maller

Gilbert Kollin

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON BUBER

Alexander S. Kohanski

Roy Branson

HARTSHORNE AND HESCHEL

Harold M. Schulweis



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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a world-view on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—*From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

IN VIEW OF THE ACCUMULATING AND DEEPENING crises in Jewish life, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, it is paradoxical that there is a small but steady stream of accessions to the Jewish people. Various groups continue to knock on the door and ask to be admitted into the Jewish community. Four such groups, radically different in background and motivation, are treated in the symposium we have entitled, "Jews, Non-Jews and Would-be Jews."

Some years ago, a minor sensation in the Jewish world was caused by the report that several scores of Italian peasants from the village of San Nicandro had been converted to Judaism and had emigrated to Israel, where they had established their own settlement. In subsequent years, these proselytes of San Nicandro were lost sight of. Their destiny during the last two decades is illumined in the paper by *Mordecai Roshwald*, which is based on his own personal interview with a member of the group. The Italian peasants of San Nicandro have, in the interval, become fully integrated—and virtually indistinguishable—from the Jewish community in Israel.

There are, in addition, several other groups of Christian believers whom the author, with justice, calls "Marginal Gentiles in Israel." Two groups of Finns have established themselves in Israel as permanent residents in a kibbutz. In Japan, the Makuya sect of Christians has a deep affinity for the Bible, expressed in its close relationship to the State of Israel.

The paper concludes by raising some interesting questions regarding the potential appeal of the land of Israel and its life-style to Christians of various persuasions.

A minor eddy of controversy in the State of Israel, though by no means an unimportant one, was occasioned by the immigration of a group of a few hundred "Black Israelites." These are a sect of American blacks, principally from Chicago, who regard themselves as the only authentic Israelites. Though their religious status and, by that token, their authenticity as Jews is by no means clear, they were settled in Dimona and a few other points, assigned homes, given jobs, and their children enrolled in the schools. Before long, however, a series of confrontations between them and the surrounding population changed the benevolent curiosity with which they were originally viewed into active hostility. Finally, the Israel Government moved to revoke their right of residence and not admit any additional members of the group under the Law of Return.

In his paper "Israel and the Black Hebrew Israelites," *Robert G. Weisbord*, an expert on black history, presents the pre-Israel experience of the "Black Israelites" in African Liberia. He then narrates their experiences in the Jewish State and describes their present position.

The American Jewish community continues to agonize over the problem of intermarriage, which poses the most palpable threat to its survival. There is, however, no unanimity with regard to the attitude to be adopted toward this phenomenon and the procedures for meeting the problem. They vary from one end of the spectrum to the other.

Allen S. Maller, in his paper, "Mixed Marriage and Reform Rabbis," maintains that, in view of the inevitability of intermarriages, the best solution is to make every effort to win the non-Jewish partner for Judaism *before marriage* and integrate him or her into Jewish life *thereafter*. He believes that such marriages have important advantages for the Jewish community and, therefore, suggests that they be designated as "mizvah marriages," since he regards such marriages as not being inferior to marriages between two Jewish partners. JUDAISM has always accorded complete freedom of expression to its contributors and this paper is no exception. The Editor, however, wishes to express his view that calling mixed marriages "mizvah marriages" means glorifying a practice with which we must perforce come to terms, but which hardly deserves the praise which the title "mizvah marriage" implies.

While the first three papers deal with groups who, in one sense or another, have taken the initiative in seeking admittance to Judaism, there are those who feel that passivity on the part of the Jewish community is not called for. In his paper, "The Advisability of Seeking Converts," *Gilbert Kollin* argues for a more positive and active campaign to invite interested non-Jews to explore the resources for personal self-fulfillment which a Jewish world-view and way of life can offer them.

Not the least advantage of an active campaign to seek sincere converts would be an increase in the Jewish population. It would be salutary to make up for the losses to Judaism caused by the Nazi Holocaust and the attrition going on in the free world through alienation in all its forms, running the gamut from mere indifference and lack of concern, through intermarriage, to the official repudiation of Jewish belonging.

In the Summer 1974 issue, Sol Tanenzapf defended the validity of the thought of A. J. Heschel in the face of criticisms that have been leveled against it in some quarters. The article, "Charles Hartshorne and the Defenders of Heschel," which appears in this issue, is more than a rejoinder to this earlier paper. *Harold M. Schulweis* is not concerned here with Heschel's thought *per se*. He calls attention to a perennial problem confronting theologians and philosophers when they attempt to relate Biblical attitudes and insights to the formulations of modern think-

ers. The paper has stimulated the Editor to intensive thought in reacting to its basic contentions. It is hoped that it will perform a similar service for the reader who is prepared to give concentrated attention to a closely reasoned and significant treatment of an important issue.

The question of the "Jewishness" of Israel continues as a perennial issue, going far beyond the degree of religious observance to be found in the State. Since language is more than a mere instrument for transmitting ideas, the vicissitudes of modern Hebrew during the past few decades shed light on the inner spiritual life of the people.

In his paper, "From *Leshon Hakodesh* to *Shok Totali*," *Theodore Friedman*, now a resident of Israel, comments on the flood of European and American words that threaten to inundate the Hebrew language. He argues that this tendency may obliterate its basic character, which has been preserved through all the stages of Biblical, Mishnaic, medieval and modern Hebrew. The problem is genuine and profound; it should be pondered by all concerned with the integrity of the Jewish spirit.

It is a truism that Martin Buber is one of the seminal minds in the religious thought of the twentieth century. His impact upon religious philosophy in general and Christian theology in particular has been extensive. While he has exerted substantial influence on individual Jewish thinkers, it still remains true that he has not been equally influential on mainstream Jewish religious thought. One of the reasons may be his stress upon the relationship of the individual to God, whereas Judaism stresses the role of the community, though by no means exclusively. Another factor may be Buber's view of revelation which is, for him, primarily an experience rather than a body of content. As a result, Buber never came to grips with the role of halakhah in Judaism and the position which it should occupy in religious life generally. It may therefore be argued that, in several crucial respects, Buber misapprehended the true nature of traditional Judaism.

Whatever the reasons may be, Buber is generally regarded more as a religious philosopher of Jewish background, than as an exponent of the philosophy of Judaism.

To correct this imbalance, *Alexander S. Kohanski* presents a comprehensive picture of "Martin Buber's Philosophy of Judaism." The author points out that each stage in Buber's philosophy of religion was closely linked to a corresponding level of concern with Judaism. The paper, therefore, suggests the importance of recalling that religion and Judaism are distinct but not separate, in Buber's spiritual universe.

In the mass range of ideas and insights which Martin Buber developed, and which made him one of the seminal minds in the religious thought of the twentieth century, his concept of mutuality, the "I-Thou"

relationship is perhaps most fundamental and best known. It has contributed significantly to the contemporary perception of the nature of knowledge which is epistemology, and the nature of man which is anthropology in its philosophic sense.

Roy Branson, in his paper, "The Individual and the Commune," is highly appreciative of Buber's significant contributions. However, he points out that Buber's approach has limitations in its understanding of the relationship of the individual to the group, be it the family, the commune, or the nation. For his critique, Branson utilizes the concept of "radical evil" in man, which is central to the thinking of such Christian theologians as Gogarten and Niebuhr. It is part of Branson's background as well. However, his thoughtful and incisive analysis of the limitations of Buber's social philosophy transcends any specific religious tradition and constitutes a significant contribution to the understanding of Buber.

The distinction between the Sabbath and the weekday is maintained in Judaism, even in matters of mourning. This sensitive quality is discussed by *Joel B. Wolowelsky* in "A Note on Shabbat Mourning."

Ever since Matthew Arnold's famous distinction between Hellenism and Hebraism, esthetics has been regarded as the hallmark of the Greek spirit and ethics as the basic concern of the Jewish tradition. Obviously, no iron curtain separates these two ultimates of human aspiration. Hellenism was, by no means, indifferent to ethical concerns, as is clear from the riches of Greek philosophy. On the other hand, the esthetic component of Biblical and post-Biblical literature was not recognized as early, probably because of the sacred character of Scripture. It was not until the eighteenth century that Herder, in Germany, and Lowth, in England, called attention to the structure of Biblical poetry, in which, to be sure, they had been anticipated by the Italian-Jewish scholar, Azariah da Rossi, some two centuries earlier.

Chaim W. Reines, in his paper, "Beauty in the Bible and the Talmud," calls attention to the conscious appreciation of physical beauty and thus adds another dimension to our understanding of the role of the esthetic in Jewish life and thought.

The near-coincidence of the bicentennial of the American Declaration of Independence and the centenary of the founding of the Hebrew Union College, the academic center of Reform Judaism, leads *Harry R. Richmond* to reflect on what he calls "Theology In Twilight." He concludes that, while "theology" plays a relatively minor role in Judaism, a secular Judaism is lacking in vitality and staying power.

R. G.

Marginal Gentiles in Israel

MORDECAI ROSHWALD

"... and nations that knew not thee
shall run unto thee" (*Isaiah* 55:5)

Introduction

MODERN ISRAEL, BESIDES AWAKENING THE CONCERN and commitment of many Jews living outside the Promised Land, also stirs the imagination and emotions of some non-Jews, or gentiles (to use a Judeo-centric term). The return of the Biblical people to their land and the quest for new forms of community (the Kibbutz) are among the well-known factors which arouse the curiosity and sentiments of these. This attitude is displayed in a wide spectrum of interest and involvement among various individuals and groups—ranging from lukewarm curiosity to a veritable devotion.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze a few groups of gentiles whose interest in, and commitment to, Israel has been so persistent that they can be regarded as being marginal gentiles in respect to Israel; indeed, in some cases, they have gone beyond the margin to become absorbed by the Jewish population there. The groups concerned are three: Italians from San Nicandro, a Finnish group (or, in a sense, two groups) and a Japanese group. Each of these has developed its relationship to Judaism and Israel independently of the other and each shows certain peculiarities. Therefore, each has to be explored independently, though certain general conclusions will be attempted following this exploration.

The study of these groups was initiated and to some extent carried out in Israel during the spring and summer of 1973. The contacts and interviews made on that occasion facilitated the collection of the basic information, which could then be supplemented through correspondence in some cases, and eventually analyzed and co-ordinated. In the case of the San Nicandro Italians there was information available due to a thorough study of Elena Cassin, *San Nicandro*, published in French and in English translation in 1959.¹ Here we could start from and utilize a well explored material.

1. Elena Cassin, *San Nicandro, The Story of a Religious Phenomenon*, translated by Douglas West, (London: Cohen and West, 1959). First published in French by La Librairie Plon, 1957.

Cf. also, Pinhas Lapid, *The Prophet of San Nicandro*, (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1953.)

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A.

The San Nicandro story has been told in the above mentioned book. It concerns a group of Roman Catholic Italians of humble circumstances, peasants and artisans, from a rather backward region. As told by a woman of that group and rephrased by Elena Cassin,

It had all happened in 1931, the ninth year of the Fascist era, in San Nicandro, a little town in Monte Gargano. A cripple called Donato Manduzio, the "scholar" of a group of mostly illiterate men and women, was one day given a Bible by a friend. He read the Old Testament, and Genesis in particular, and was filled with amazement. He felt a sense of brotherhood, of shared faith, with the Hebrew people vanished, as he thought, from the face of the earth countless centuries ago.²

Manduzio and his followers took the Biblical stories literally and these stories had a great appeal to them. Moreover, Manduzio started having dreams which he regarded as revelations, similar to those of Abraham and Moses. He burned his icons, started to observe the Sabbath and became the leader of the small group forming around him.

The second act of the drama was the discovery that the followers of the Old Testament, the descendants of the ancient Hebrews, were still around and could be found in Italy. This must have not only provided encouragement for the new followers of the independently discovered, or revealed, religion; it also led to correspondence and contacts between the group and the Chief Rabbi in Rome. The contact was not, as far as the group was concerned, in every respect satisfactory. The reserve which contemporary Judaism shows to potential converts (especially people who have dreams and visions), as well as the ascendancy of anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy under the influence of the Nazis, reduced the potential enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the relationship strengthened the group's adherence to Judaism and provided some guidance for it.

The third act of the drama developed in the second half of 1943, when members of the group encountered Jewish soldiers from Mandatory Palestine, serving with the British Eighth Army in Italy. The recognition, significantly, was achieved through the shield of David emblems of the soldiers, which the San Nicandrians identified. The encouragement by some Jewish officers not only strengthened the ties of the group with Judaism, but added Zionist fervour to it and created a practical objective. In 1946, a Rabbi sent from Rome performed a collective formal conversion of a group of thirteen persons, which was followed by other conversions in 1949. And then, in 1949 and 1950, the bulk of the converted Jews of San Nicandro left for their new Promised Land, the recently established State of Israel. They were preceded by a few who

2. Cassin, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

left as early as 1948. There the bulk of the converts settled in a *moshav*³ in upper Galilee. The total number of these immigrants seems to have been about fifty.

*

A visit in 1973 to the *moshav* where the San Nicandro Jews were supposed to reside proved futile. Not one of them seemed to have remained there; the place was inhabited by Jewish immigrants from a Moslem country. A further search led to the home of one of the original immigrants, located in another settlement in upper Galilee. It was an interview with the father of the family there, which is the foundation of the following report. A search for other families, by now scattered in various places in Israel, could not be undertaken.

The interviewee—let us refer to him as S.N. (for San Nicandro)—retained his Italian family name, but had a Hebrew first name, as did his wife. He spoke Hebrew well. Born in 1924, Roman Catholic, he was converted in 1949, the year of his immigration from San Nicandro to Israel. His wife was also of Italian origin and a convert to Judaism. They had seven children. One of them, a young man in the uniform of the Israel Defence Army, happened to be at home and was present, though he did not participate in the conversation. S.N.'s wife hospitably offered black coffee, but also kept out of the interview.

According to his own statement, S.N. was happy in Israel. His relations with other members of the community, Jews of Jewish origin, were good. Though no questions were asked about his financial circumstances, the appearance was of modest but not unsatisfactory conditions. The separate one-storey house had a very well kept garden with beautiful flowers in front. The living-room was fairly simply furnished, but it was clean and pleasant.

The impression of S.N.'s satisfaction was enhanced by his remarks about the other members of the original group. According to him, thirty-seven persons (not fifty) had immigrated to Israel and only one had returned. Today, he said, the original group had expanded into about one hundred people. The statement—demographically plausible and exemplified by S.N.'s own family growth—seemed to indicate the objective success of the San Nicandro conversion and immigration, as well as a subjective sense of pride of the interviewee.

Asked about his religiosity, S.N. remarked that he was less strictly

3. A *moshav* can be described as a semi-collective form of settlement. Unlike in the kibbutz, each family has its own private home and farm, but unlike in a regular *moshavah* (a free enterprise settlement) there is collective ownership of heavy farm machinery and collective sale of produce and purchase of supplies. While this form of settlement was developed in the twenties, it was deemed especially suitable for the mass immigration in the early days of the State of Israel, which was not recruited from socialistically oriented pioneers, like the founders of the kibbutzim.

observant today than he had been originally. Thus, he would switch on the television on the Sabbath. Possibly, though this was not clearly indicated, he was ready to travel on the rest day as well. The gist of his attitude was, or seems to have been, that the strict observance of all the rules was not a matter of cardinal importance; it was the overall attitude to religion and Israel that mattered. He remarked, perhaps with a touch of irony: "There are two old women [of the San Nicandro group] who are very strict."

This change, or modification, of S.N.'s attitude to religion may be interpreted as a significant symptom of his assimilation into Israel society. Apparently S.N. did not feel any longer an outsider converted into a new belief. The belief was his and he could make personal modifications. It may also mean the acceptance of the Israeli reality, amidst which he had been living for nearly a quarter of a century, and in which religious observance is not accepted with rigidity by the bulk of the Jewish population. His remark about the two old women who were very strict seemed to imply that they were the exception, rather than the rule—one would be tempted to say, that they had imported the religiosity from Italy—and that the bulk of the San Nicandrians learned the art of moderation in respect to religion.

Yet, while S.N. and his family seemed well integrated into modern Israel, the absorption did not seem total—at least as far as their own awareness was concerned. This became evident accidentally. An acquaintance of S.N. came in during the interview and S.N. made it clear to the interviewer that he did not want the visitor to know that he, S.N., was a convert to Judaism. S.N. wanted to pass as a born Jew. Thus, the conversation meandered for a long while about issues irrelevant to the interview. When the visitor had left, S.N. explained that being a proselyte might be held both for him and against him. He was primarily concerned not to affect detrimentally the marriage prospects of his children.

This attitude clearly revealed the intention of S.N. and his family to pass as regular members of the community. It plainly was an issue on which they had pursued a deliberate and consistent policy. The policy seems to have been successful, for the initial search by the interviewer for the "Italian proselytes" in the settlement met with a response by one of the inhabitants to the effect that he did not know whether the people inquired about were proselytes, but that they had come from Italy.

It is impossible to say whether the misgivings of S.N. and his family about being converts, or children of converts, were justified. While most Israelis would have little hesitation about marrying children of converts, and while orthodox Judaism regards a proselyte—not a potential one, but a duly converted person—as a complete Jew, it is conceivable that some people in some communities might entertain a suspicious attitude to them. Conceivably, it may have been the conservatism of an

Italian peasant which made S.N. suspect a kind of a conservatism among the Jews.

But, perhaps, above all it was the determination on the part of S.N. and his family to be regular Jews and normal Israelis which made them secretive about their gentile origin. They did not want their extraordinary conversion to be counted in their favour, as they did not want it to be counted against them (an ambivalence of which S.N. was himself aware, as indicated above). They wanted to be normal people and citizens. This quest may well have been typical of other members of the group, and may have constituted the major cause for the disruption of the community and its dispersal in various places in Israel, which makes it so hard to locate the San Nicandrians. Deplorable as it may be to sociologists, the proselytes of San Nicandro took their great decision a generation ago, and they want to enjoy the fruits of this decision, not live on the nostalgia of that great moment. This, obviously, is the ultimate test of the soundness and solidity of the members of this group. Their marginality as one-time gentiles has given way to their normalcy as Jews and Israelis.

B.

The Finnish group attracted to Israel does not have origins as extraordinary as those of the Italians from San Nicandro. Yet, whatever the historical foundations, the history of its links with Israel, and perhaps the future of the connections, are far from what passes as usual or ordinary.

The information about the Finnish group (let us call it Group A) was culled from a meeting with some of the members and a more formal interview with two of them, as well as from a conversation with a Jewish member of the kibbutz Kiryat Anavim. Another Finnish group (let us call it Group B) was mentioned in that conversation, and further information about this group was provided by a report in an Israeli daily newspaper.

The Finns (Group A) are focussed in Kiryat Anavim and the neighboring Ma'aleh HaHamishah, two kibbutzim located some five miles west of Jerusalem. They belong to an organization within the Lutheran Church, called in Finnish *Karmel-Yhdistys* and in Hebrew *Agudat Carmel*. We shall refer to it in the English equivalent as the Carmel Union.

The Carmel Union was founded in Helsinki in 1947. It was preceded by a Norwegian association, which, however, does not seem to be active—at least not in Israel. The head of the Carmel Union, about five thousand members strong, is a Protestant minister in Helsinki. The Union wants its members to come to know Israel, the Holy Land, in a more thorough and intimate way. To achieve this objective, twenty-five to thirty members of the Union come to Kiryat Anavim and Ma'aleh

Haḥamishah each year for one year. There they live like members of the kibbutz, working there and learning Hebrew.

The justification for this plan is not only the quest for knowledge, but also the desire to help—religiously and altruistically inspired. The members of the Carmel Union see in the emergence of the State of Israel a realization of prophetic visions and consider it their duty to help in the prophecy-come-true. This quest to help, explained in religious terms by a member of the group, was corroborated in a somewhat different, though not contradictory, manner by the Jewish member of the kibbutz Kiryat Anavim. According to him, twelve years earlier, a group of tourists from Carmel Union came to the local *beit-margoa*.⁴ They were apparently attracted to the place and asked how could they be helpful. The answer was: "Send us youth groups over." And so the Carmel Union started sending their groups over every year since.

If the first Finnish visitors to Kiryat Anavim were tourists staying in the *beit-margoa*, the present visitors, if this is still the proper description, are practically indistinguishable from the regular members of the kibbutz. They are dressed in similar working clothes, live in similar small living quarters, eat in the same common dining-hall with the regular members and work with them in the fields, or rather, on the mountain slopes, or in the kitchen, or wherever necessary. The only difference seems to be their halting Hebrew—some hardly speak the language at all—and the fact that they are not regular, permanent members of the kibbutz.

Of course, there is a more profound, if invisible, difference. They are Finns and Christians, while the members of these particular two kibbutzim, besides being Israeli Jews, are socialists and mostly agnostics or atheists (though one could argue that their Zionism, as well as their socialism, are not free from religious overtones). Yet the national difference and the ideological gap do not seem to create an obstacle. For one side does not wish to convert the other and the association is temporary. But the symbiotic relationship is not based merely on negative considerations. For there is clear good will on both sides. The Finns come to help and are sincere and perseverant in their endeavour. The members of the kibbutz know to appreciate this sincerity and devotion, as well as the actual work of the visitors. Moreover, the co-operation and mutual goodwill seem to create a direct human contact which is the foundation of comradeship and even of friendship.

In a few instances the relationship has exceeded comradeship or

4. *Beit-margoa*, literally a resting-house, does not have a precise equivalent in the Anglo-Saxon world, or vocabulary. It is a combination of a sanatorium and a resort. People go there after illness to recuperate, as well as for their yearly vacation, or just to relax for a few days. The emphasis is on good and ample food, besides clean and pleasant lodgings, and the location is usually scenic and attractive. Various kibbutzim have developed these institutions as a profitable economic enterprise, serving both labor-affiliated persons and private customers, including occasional tourists from abroad. Kiryat Anavim and Ma'aleh Haḥamishah each have such a *beit-margoa*.

friendship. Six individuals from the visiting groups remained in the two kibbutzim and were accepted as members. Four women settled in Kiryat Anavim and one woman and one man in Ma'ale Haḥamishah. Apparently, in each case, a marriage to a Jewish member of the kibbutz was involved, and in most, if not all, cases a formal conversion to Judaism accompanied this transition. Thus, these marginal gentiles crossed the border into full Jewish-Israeli commitment and way-of-life.

One of the six, a young woman, was interviewed. For the interview, she was freed from her work in the kitchen during a morning hour. She was frank and candid in responding to the questions and her answers reveal, perhaps, much of the mentality of the group—or, at least, the proselytes from amongst it.

F.G. (for Finnish Girl) was born in Finland in 1942. She was a Lutheran and became a member of the Carmel Union. By profession she is a nurse for backward children. Her first trip to Israel, with the Carmel group, was in 1966. She returned in 1970, met her present husband, was converted to Judaism, married and remained in the kibbutz. She said she was happy with her present life and she looked it.

These external facts are complemented by further information which shed light on the inner life of F.G. Her first acquaintance with Israel was through the Bible, which her father used to read aloud when she was a child. She did not have any contacts with Jews before coming to Israel. Since her childhood, Israel had a fascination for her. After returning from her first trip to Israel, she longed to go back. Significantly, she wanted to stay in Israel even before she met her husband. One was led to conclude that, though F.G.'s marriage to a Jew may have played a not insignificant role in her conversion to Judaism and her settling in Israel, the attraction to Israel and Judaism preceded the marriage and formed the basic conditions for the final commitment. In a way, the Protestant background and the peculiar concern of the Carmel Union for contacts with Israel served as an important factor leading to absorption into Judaism and Israeli society.

The conversion to Judaism is not looked at favourably by the Carmel Union. It is a Protestant group and, naturally, it wants its members to remain Christian. Its leaders must find it ironic that it is their zeal that has led to the loss of members. Yet, as one of the group explained, the conversions, though objected to, have not deterred the Carmel Union from continuing its Israeli program.

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A short distance west of Kiryat Anavim, near a place called Neve-Ilan, a group of about thirty Finns (our Group B)⁵ is living in a tem-

5. A journalistic report on this group appeared in the Weekly Supplement of *Ma'ariv* (Hebrew Daily) of 15th June 1973, pp. 44-45. It is the source of most of the following information.

porary settlement which they built themselves. They intend to build a moshav of their own and to settle in Israel for good. They have been living in Israel for a number of years and have persisted in their endeavour, despite the difficulties encountered.

This group is not affiliated with the Carmel Union, or any other organization. Its members are farmers, craftsmen, nurses, etc.—not what we would call “intellectuals.” They seem to be a collection of individuals and families who are attracted to Israel and, all being Finnish, want to live in a collective settlement of their own.

The reasons given for this decision are not religious—at least, not religious in the technical sense. There seems to be a fascination with the spiritual tenor of life, as contrasted with the materialism of Europe. The directness and the cordiality of the Israeli manner is another attraction, and the collective co-operative forms of life are deemed worth emulating. In short, it is the new Israel, or some of its nobler facets, which are looked at as a true way of life.

Of course, one can suspect that a more purely religious motivation may have had its impact on the group. Its leader, for example, worked for five years in Kiryat Anavim and Ma’aleh Haḥamishah, the place of the Carmel Union group. Another member of Group B worked with the Carmel Union in Finland. Some ideological contacts, in some cases at least, may very well have been made.

The group faces, of course, the problem of its future in Israel. If it settles, its children are likely to be absorbed into Jewish Israel. They are already attending a Hebrew school and are likely to marry with Jews. The problem is realized, but seems to be taken in stride. “If the children, of their own free will, choose to be Jews, let them be Jews,” asserted one member in the said newspaper interview. Moreover, the members of the group would like to be full citizens and serve in the army. The gist of this attitude is that they want to be Israelis in every respect, short of becoming converted to Judaism. And even that possibility is contemplated with equanimity for their second generation. Essentially, it is an intention to be converted to Israelism rather than to Judaism, to accept the new forms of social life developed in Israel rather than the religious forms and traditions of Judaism.

It is this distinction which creates problems for Group B. They cannot settle in Israel on the basis of the Law of Return, which gives this right to Jews, or, at least, persons related to Jews.⁶ The Govern-

6. The Law of Return (1950) states that “every Jew has the right to immigrate to Israel.” (See *Sefer Haḥukim—Book of Laws*—No. 51, 6 July 1950.) The second amendment to the Law of Return defines a Jew as a person born of a Jewish mother, or converted to Judaism, who does not belong to another religion. The amendment also extends the rights of immigration to a non-Jewish spouse of a Jewish person, to the children and grandchildren of this person, as well as the spouses of these, but excluding anyone who had been a Jew and was converted to another religion of his own will. (See Law of Return, Amendment No. 2, 1970.)

ment may give them the right to settle, but it is not obliged to do so by law. This writer was told by an old member of Kiryat Anavim that the kibbutz is trying to help the group—and an old kibbutz like Kiryat Anavim has influence in Government circles. However, there must be opposing forces, perhaps among religious parties, and they carry weight, too.

Obviously, the problem is not one of thirty sincere and dedicated individuals, but one of policy. How should one treat gentile marginality, intent on self-effacement: Should Israel, and Judaism, accept people into the fold, because they are good, devoted, useful and may contribute to the well-being of the country and the nation, besides being eventually assimilated into Jewish Israel? Or should the letter of the religious law, the halakhah, decide—not only in a case of religious conversion, but also in immigration and settlement policy, irrespective of expediency, common-sense and simple humanity?

C.

The Japanese group of marginal gentiles shows some basic similarities with the Finnish group. It, too, is a Protestant sect, founded in 1947, that is to say, the same year as the Finnish Carmel Union. That both beginnings virtually coincide with the time of the establishment of the State of Israel may, or may not, be accidental. In any case, the religious links to Judaism and to revived Israel seem to be significant elements in the theological foundation of both sects. Yet the Japanese movement has its own peculiarities and has to be explained in its own terms.

The information about the Japanese group was obtained through a personal contact with a member of the movement in a kibbutz in Israel. This led to an exchange of letters with some spokesmen of the group in Japan and the United States and the supplying of various pamphlets (in English, Hebrew and Japanese) and of two books (in English) written by the founder of the group, the late Professor Ikuro Teshima.

The group calls itself the "Original Gospel Movement," but is usually referred to as the "Makuya (Tabernacle) Movement," or, simply, Makuya.⁷ It sprang from the Non-Church movement which, opposing the institutionalized, European-dominated churches, wanted to return to the original gospel and the Hebrew sources of Christianity. This element has been absorbed by the Tabernacle movement which, however, emphasizes revelation, faith, ecstatic experiences and healing miracles, besides learning. The use of the word "Tabernacle" (the *ohel mo-ed* of the wandering Israelites) in the name of the movement, signifies, among other things, the presence of God in the community of believers and the

7. The presentation of the Makuya theology is derived from Ikuro Teshima, *Introduction to the Original Gospel Faith*, (Tokyo: Light of Life Press, 1970). Of course, only some basic elements are here briefly discussed.

non-institutional character of the movement (the tent of God, not His temple or church).

A peculiarity of the Makuya movement which is of focal interest in our context is its attachment to Judaism. While the movement is undoubtedly Christian—Jesus and the New Testament play a central role in the beliefs of the Makuya—there are emphatic references to Jewish theologians, such as Martin Buber and Abraham Heschel (personal contacts were maintained with both) and to Jewish beliefs. The *hitlahavut* of hasidism, explained as divine sparks, and *orot hakodesh* (lights of holiness) discussed by Rabbi Kook—not to mention the more obvious references to the Old Testament—are among the cherished elements of belief. But the Makuya movement goes beyond a theological interest in, and attachment to, Judaism. In an elaborate study,⁸ Professor Teshima tries to prove the existence of significant historical and even racial contacts between ancient Israel and Japan. His contention centres on the Hada tribe, which settled in Japan nearly two thousand years ago and which is believed to have been Jewish, or rather Israelite, probably from the tribe of Zebulun (to judge by the sailboat crests of many Hada families). The arguments brought forward in support of this theory are varied: similarities in worship, the use of the Star of David as the crest of a Shinto shrine and on the kimonos for new-born babies, the Semitic features of some members of the Imperial family, some correspondence in calendars, some Israelite elements in Japanese legends, a meaningful Hebrew transliteration of some religious incantations which are incomprehensible in Japanese and so on. The conclusion of Professor Teshima is “that Japanese civilization evolved into its present form largely as a result of the contribution of the early Jews of Japan, the Hada Tribes.”⁹

The Israelite-Judaic religious roots of Christianity and the Judeo-Japanese contacts in the past are not regarded as coincidences of history, for history is not coincidental but “lies in the hand of God” and aims at “the fulfillment of His Providence on this earth.”¹⁰ Consequently, the present turning of events, with Israel re-established and Old Jerusalem restored to the Jews, is a decisive step in God-guided history, as prophesied in the Bible. The Makuya participation in the revival of modern Israel is both an expression of their religious belief in the fulfillment of Biblical prophecies and the performance of their national duty to repay the Jews for their contribution to the making of the Japanese nation. One might add that a combination of religious and national elements exemplified in this attitude is, broadly speaking, a common feature of Shintoism and of Judaism.

8. Ikuro Teshima, *The Ancient Jewish Diaspora in Japan: The Tribe of Hada, their Religious and Cultural Influence* (Tokyo: Tokyo Bible Seminary, 1973).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

The Makuya movement, which counts fifty or sixty thousand followers, is very explicit and emphatic in expressing its pro-Israel sentiments. In its various pamphlets it refers to itself not only as "Judeo-Christian," but, also, as the "New Zionist Movement." On two occasions it invited General Uzi Narkiss, symbolizing the Liberation of Old Jerusalem, as the guest of honour to its annual conventions. In 1968 and 1971, members of the Makuya demonstrated on behalf of Israel before the United Nations in New York. Four hundred of the group came to celebrate Israel's 25th anniversary in the Holy Land. Three thousand, headed by Professor Teshima, demonstrated in Tokyo, protesting Japan's yielding to Arab pressure for the sake of oil. Statements supporting Six Day War boundaries were made.

It would seem that the Japanese sect, especially in the recent years, has been more emphatic in stressing the political and even military aspects of the Jewish revival than has the Finnish group. The Japanese also seem to have wider organizational and institutional expressions. They hold conventions and publish a modest monthly magazine in Japanese, called *The Light of Life*.¹¹ The Makuya maintains branch offices overseas: four in the United States, and one each in Brazil, Greece and Israel. Unlike the subdued informal manner of the Finnish group, the Japanese group has a flair for public display. Thus, when three hundred members assembled in Israel in November of 1971, they marched in the streets of Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, clad in blue uniforms with a large Star of David on the back. The leaflet published on that occasion has, on the front page, a photograph of a long row of people dressed in these uniforms and in apparent prayer, facing the Western Wall in Jerusalem. They have also filmed their pilgrimages.

This penchant for display should not be construed as superficiality. For the beliefs of the Makuya group are genuine and sincere and are expressed not only on special occasions, but, also, in more laborious and less ostentatious ways. Not only the heads of the sect, but some of its members, are fluent in Hebrew. Some of them have studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Professor Teshima's son, following his studies in Jerusalem, continued at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Some of the members have Biblical first names such as Jacob, Saul, or Jehoash.

But perhaps the most crucial evidence of the sect's devotion to Israel is their plan—similar to that of the Finnish Carmel Union—of sending members to a kibbutz in Israel for a period of six months, to live, work and study there. Over one hundred and fifty members have participated in this project over the last twelve years. The principal kibbutz for the Japanese group is Hefzi-Bah in the Valley of Jezreel, at the foot of Mount Gilboa, though some members of the group stay in other settlements. It

11. The magazine is published by Seimei-no-Hikari-Sha, Tokyo.

is in Ḥefzi-Bah that one member of the sect was interviewed. His response may well illustrate the stand of the rank and file of the Makuya.

J.M. (for Japanese Man) was born in 1951. He was not married and was one of seven Japanese residents of Ḥefzi-Bah at the time of the interview. They were all young men. The absence of women in the group—unlike in the case of the Finns—was typical and obviously attributable to the ways and traditions of the Japanese society. J.M. had completed secondary education and used to be a businessman. He had apparently become fed up with the life of business and, in his quest to get to the roots of religious belief, he was planning to go to Greece to study New Testament Greek at a university there, after his sojourn in Israel.

While his general account about the Makuya group accorded with the information subsequently collected from other sources, there were a few details, or rather matters of emphasis which shed additional light on the sect. To start with an “external” fact, he maintained that out of the fifty thousand people who regard themselves as members of the group, only about ten per cent are active. Thus, the group is, in effect, smaller than might appear from reading its leaflets (which does not mean that the published material was intended to create a false impression). But it is mainly the “internal” aspects of the sect—its beliefs—which are worth elaboration.

The Makuya sect believes, asserted J.M., that the Jews are the Chosen People and they (the Makuya) wish to experience living in Israel. Some study Hebrew to be able to read the Bible in its original language. Life in a kibbutz, explained J.M., is especially attractive, for “kibbutz is founded on high morality.” Thus, the notion of the divine choice of Israel—an ancient religious belief—was bound with the quest for ethics translated into a form of life—a contemporary social institution. The link between the ideas of ancient Israel and the institutions of modern Israel, between religious belief and socialist way-of-life, was made by a man from a distant country and civilization, squatting on a lawn in a kibbutz located at the foot of the mountain where Saul and Jonathan had met their tragic death. This surely was a peculiar crossing of time and place—what a Jew steeped in the orthodox tradition, if not himself orthodox, might call—not unlike the Makuya—*Mashiah Zeiten*, the advent of the Messiah.

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As far as is known, the interest of the Japanese group in Israel has not produced any conversion to Judaism, or permanent settlement in Israel, as it has in the case of the Finns. Nor is there any Japanese group which intends to build a settlement of its own in Israel, comparable to the Finnish Group B.

The reasons for this difference are a matter of speculation. One possibility is the greater cultural remoteness from Jews and Israel of

the oriental civilization. For while the links of the Finns with Israel are in no way due to linguistic and cultural ties—there are hardly Finnish-speaking Jews in Israel—there is a modicum of European civilization which modern Israel may share with Finland. The common denominator of the contemporary Japanese and Israeli civilizations would be more elusive.

Another possibility is that the difference is largely accidental and, perhaps, temporary. The Japanese have not *yet* produced cases of stepping across into Judaism and/or settling in Israel, but some may do so in the future. The cultural remoteness, and perhaps the physical racial difference, may have been a reason for the absence of assimilation into Judaism or modern Israel so far. But these factors are not insurmountable, for Judaism accepts sincere conversion irrespective of race, and cultural differences between the Orient and Israel are bridgeable, as the Makuya group has, in a way, proved already.

Interestingly enough, the present writer came across a Japanese couple, not members of the Makuya movement, who also displayed a profound interest in Israel. The case may be significant as possibly indicating an involvement in Israel—actual or potential—among wider circles of Christians in Japan.

The couple in question was met accidentally in Kiryat Anavim, when the Finnish group was the object of inquiry. It was the husband who, on this occasion, was interviewed. J.P. (for Japanese Pastor) was a Minister in a Protestant church in Japan, closely related to Methodism. He was born in 1941. In 1968, he had spent one year in Israel and was at the concluding stages of his second stay which, starting in 1972, had lasted one year and seven months. He was about to return to Japan with his wife who was shortly to be delivered of a child. J.P. had four years of university and four years of seminary behind him. His Japanese wife was also professionally associated with the church, as a teacher.

Here, obviously, was a case of mature judgment and lasting interest in Israel, as the two and one half years of total stay indicated. Moreover, J.P. indicated that he wanted to return to Israel for visits on every future opportunity. The source of this attachment, while without the peculiar theology of the Makuya group, shared some of its attitudes. It was also strikingly reminiscent of the attitudes of the Finnish gentiles, and even of the personal history of F.G. (Finnish Girl).

Coming from a family of pastors, J.P. had studied the Bible from childhood and, thus, became attached to Israel. He chose to live and work in a kibbutz, because, as he explained, he wanted to work alongside other people, away from the world of egoism and the race for money. Here, again, there was a case of a search in Israel and in a kibbutz for an antidote to a life of material prosperity combined with spiritual vacuity.

Here, again, a link was conceived—implicitly if not expressly—between Israel of the Bible and the socialist kibbutz of modern Israel.

Conclusion

The three marginal gentile groups discussed here, while entirely independent of each other, show some common traits. Though these characteristics may be insufficient for forming any generalizations about gentile attraction to Israel—in the past, the present or the future—they seem worth consideration for the sake of a better understanding of the three groups and as a hypothetical guidance for possible comparable situations in the future. In a certain sense, two of the groups share traits absent in the case of the Italians, but even these more exclusive characteristics seem sufficiently pregnant with meaning and potential significance to deserve further mention.

In all three groups the original impulse towards Judaism or Israel did not apparently emerge through contacts with Jews. The Italians from San Nicandro did not know of the existence of Jews, the number of Jews in Japan is negligible and there is no evidence of Jewish contacts with the groups in Finland.

The original impulse was given not by human beings, but by a book—the Scriptures, the Bible. One could say that in these cases the dictum “In the beginning was the Word,” the *logos*, was literally true. Of course, the impact of the Word was, in these cases, on people attuned to it, on people in quest of a spiritual, religious answer to their search.

Yet, if the Book was the beginning, it was not the ending. Nor was it sufficient in itself in these cases, as it seems to be in the case of millions of Christians. The Book, the Word, led to the people which forms the protagonist of the Bible, the people of Israel. The fact that this people, far from being dead, was experiencing a national, political, social and cultural renaissance constituted an enormous reinforcement to the Word. And so the trip that was started with the text had to be continued into the revived land. The combination of the two gave the religious quest a sense of reality and realization which the Word itself might not have been able to provide.

This quest for realization led the San Nicandrians and some Finnish individuals to go over the border of gentile marginality and accept Judaism and settlement in Israel. Living as Jews in Israel seems to have given these people more meaning, also in the religious sense, than practicing Christianity in the conventional manner. That Christians should wish to go back to the Judaic sources of Christianity need not be surprising, even if the phenomenon is rare. That this quest is fully realized by settling in modern Israel is a further testimony to the links between the ancient civilization and religion and its modern continuation and reincarnation.

In all three cases, the attraction to modern Israel has led not to the cities, old or new, but to rural Israel. While in the case of the Italian converts this may have been due to the accident of their largely peasant background, at least in the other groups the trend is deliberate. This tendency may be—partially and perhaps subconsciously—due to the pastoral and agricultural nature of the ancient Israelite civilization as described in the Bible, and this may have affected the San Nicandrians as well. But, perhaps more significantly, this trend indicates a deliberate choice of a form of life associated with the rural culture of modern Israel—namely, the co-operative settlement.

The kibbutz, as a prominent expression of a co-operative egalitarian community, has awakened the interest of many people around the world, without any religious or Biblical connection. In the case of our Finnish and Japanese groups this fairly widespread interest was greatly reinforced by a spiritual and religious quest. An egalitarian community, whose members share the fruits of their labour, rather than pursue individual enrichment, has had a powerful appeal for people fed up with the unsatisfiable satiety of the modern world which is the concomitant of economic progress. The fact that this egalitarian community is living in the Land of Israel and consists of Jews, the descendants of ancient Israelites, speaking the language of the Bible, apparently lends the socio-ethical answer a religious aura and significance.

Paradoxically, as it would seem, the encouragement to the various marginal gentiles—to the extent that it has been forthcoming at all—has come primarily from non-religious quarters in Israel. The reasons for this are rather intricate. In the first place, Orthodox Jewry does not take the initiative to explain Judaism to gentiles, even if their curiosity is sincere. It accepts converts, if they prove to be sincere, but it does not try to make them. The non-religious Israelis, on the other hand, adopt a more humanistic attitude (in the sense of *nihil humani mihi alienum puto*), which allows tolerance, and even sympathy, towards a strange belief or a surprising quest for conversion, if these prove to be sincere and, especially, if they lead to a positive involvement in Israel. The quest for a social ideal on the part of some of the marginal gentiles (the Finns and the Japanese) and their participation in the kibbutz work enhances the encouraging response on the part of the kibbutzim and the supporters of the co-operative movement.

The marginal gentile groups explored here are of small numerical significance. The actual count of those involved, not only of those actually absorbed into Jewish Israel but even of those with a deep sustained interest, is negligible. If this is the evaluation with regard to Israel's population, it is even more so when the populations of the countries of origin of the groups are considered. Not only are the fifty thousand Makuya—(with apparently only five thousand ac-

tive members)—a drop in the one hundred million bucket of Japan; even the five thousand Carmel Union members do not constitute a significant number in Finland. One need hardly mention forty or fifty emigrants from Italy. However, the phenomenon, in its various manifestations, is of a qualitative interest which cannot be measured by the numbers, absolute or relative, or actual participants. For not only is it of intrinsic interest to sociologists and other curious people; it also touches on psychological elements—some might choose to call them “spiritual forces”—which are the stuff that religious and social movements are made of. A man like Manduzio, with his discovery of the Old Testament and his dreams and revelations, under suitable circumstances could have become a Mohammed, or at least a Joseph Smith (the founder of the Mormon church) leading an army of followers from the *Mezzogiorno* to the Promised Land. The Finns, under favourable conditions, could turn into neo-Subbotniki and the Makuya become latter-day Khazars.

However, the circumstances have not proved favourable in this sense. It would seem that the absence of suitable conditions for wider attraction to, and assimilation into, Judaism and Israel is partly the result of lack of interest as far as Jews and Israel are concerned. The religious-ethical message emanating from Judaism and from modern Israel is not turned into an active principle by Jews and Israelis. No serious effort is made to explain it to the eager gentiles, still less to recruit them. Their ardour is, on the whole, met with indifference, or, at best, with sympathetic indulgence. Whether this policy is correct at this juncture of Jewish history is outside the scope of this study.

Israel and the Black Hebrew Israelites

ROBERT G. WEISBORD

IN THE FALL AND EARLY WINTER OF 1967, APPROXIMATELY one hundred and seventy-five Afro-Americans left the United States, the land of their birth, and took up residence in the republic of Liberia. Back-to-Africa movements are nothing new in black American history.¹ In fact, Liberia came into being as an independent nation in the pre-Civil War period as a result of the repatriation of "free" Negroes, has been ruled continuously by Americo-Liberians and has been the focus of most Negro repatriation projects ever since.

What was novel about the 1967 relocation was that the new arrivals described themselves as "Black Hebrews" or "Hebrew Israelites." They hailed from various states. Many were from Illinois, where they had been organized as the Abeta Israel Hebrew Center on the south side of Chicago whence they began their trek to Africa.² Most of the emigrants were young, in their twenties and thirties, but the contingent included one eighty-two year old woman. Some had Hebraized their names. "... American names were given to slaves by their masters. I am no longer a slave, and my only master is the God of Israel." A spokesman said that it was their intention to surrender their United States citizenship, "if you can call it that—they really don't have a citizenship to give up."³ Bitterness over racial oppression was apparent in their statements. "We'd rather live in the jungles of Africa than in a house in Cicero [Illinois]," said one.⁴ Another, an ex-paratrooper, later explained, "I left the United States with my wife and daughter to escape economic slavery, hatred and murder."⁵

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1. For a survey of such movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans and the Afro-American* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973).

2. There are currently a dozen black Jewish groups in Chicago, not including the Abeta congregation. The latter disintegrated after the overseas migrations to Liberia and, afterwards, to Israel. Two sects, the House of Israel Hebrew Culture Center and the B'nai Zaken, are believed to have supplied a few of the migrants also. According to the Chicago Board of Rabbis, the Abeta congregation of Hebrew Israelites had little contact with the Jewish community in Chicago.

3. *New York Times*, 20 September, 1967.

4. *Ibid.*, 18 January, 1968.

5. Larry Price, "Black Jews in the Promised Land," *Chicago Today Magazine*, 8 November, 1970, pp. 8 ff.

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The Liberians were initially confused by the identity of the black Hebrews. That confusion persisted until their departure. The *Liberian Star*, which had reported the presence of Black Muslim priests in the body of Afro-Americans which had arrived in September, 1967, still depicted the Hebrew Israelites as Black Muslims at the very end of their Liberian stay.⁶ Perhaps when they were in Liberia, which restricts its citizenship to black persons, the Abeta blacks accentuated their racial solidarity with the West Africans rather than their Jewishness. Yet, a correspondent who visited the Hebrew Israelites in Liberia said that their motivation in leaving the United States was "more religious than racial." They saw their emigration as a fulfillment of divine prophecy.⁷

Within months, a small number of these pioneers returned to the United States. A few remained in Monrovia, Liberia's capital city, but the majority established themselves on a three hundred acre site near Gbatallah in a snake-infested region, more than eighty miles from the capital. Bush was cleared, wells dug and dwellings constructed in short order. Work was begun on a house of worship for the migrants. Most tilled the soil, though they were generally lacking in agricultural experience. To raise money, the expatriate group resorted to sundry enterprises, such as operating a snack bar in Monrovia where the menu included "soul chicken" and an ice cream dish imaginatively advertised as "soul on ice."

The real attitude of the Liberian government towards the black Jews has been shrouded in mystery. Whereas the New York *Amsterdam News* stated that it had been informed by the government of President William V. S. Tubman that immigrants were still welcome,⁸ the *New York Times* wrote that unidentified Liberian officials were fearful that these blacks "could be the vanguard of large migrations from the United States that would upset the political balance here."⁹ Life was difficult in the wilderness camp, but a report published in November, 1968, indicated that the doughy band was content in Liberia. At about the same time, they vowed to an *Ebony* correspondent, "We are here to stay."¹⁰ A year later, James A. A. Pierre, Liberian Attorney-General, expressed displeasure with the immigrants, and faulted them for not assimilating into Liberian society.

The Liberian government is reluctant to permit recent immigrants to congregate in one place as the Hebrew Israelites did in Gbatallah. Attorney-General Pierre further charged that the American blacks had no

6. *Liberian Star*, 18 September, 1967 and 4 November, 1969.

7. Era Bell Thompson, "Are Black Americans Welcome In Africa," *Ebony*, January, 1969, pp. 44-46.

8. *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 December, 1967.

9. *New York Times*, 18 January, 1968.

10. Thompson, "Are Black Americans Welcome In Africa," p. 46.

apparent intention of working or becoming useful citizens,¹¹ and a deportation order for seventy-five of them was issued in November, 1969, though it was subsequently rescinded.¹² It was the late President Tubman, himself, who countermanded the deportation order. Taking issue with the Attorney-General, Tubman said that the government was not coercing the immigrants to become naturalized Liberian citizens, as some people mistakenly believed.

Especially remarkable were the unverified reports about the Hebrew Israelites which President Tubman refuted. False and conflicting gossip had been circulated that the black Americans were in contact with unnamed outside reactionaries, that they had adorned their synagogues with pictures of Mao Tze Tung, and that visitors to their bailiwick were restricted in their movements. These allegations had been investigated and found to be without any basis in fact, President Tubman emphasized.¹³

In retrospect, the Hebrew Israelites argue that when he castigated the Afro-Americans, Attorney-General Pierre spoke for himself and not for the government of Liberia. They perceive Pierre as their nemesis and President Tubman as their champion. Nasi Ahsiel Ben Israel, a high ranking Hebrew Israelite, asserted in 1972 that President Tubman actually earmarked \$40,000 for his people but that "thieves in the government" stole it.¹⁴

A little more than two years after they fled the United States to seek freedom in Africa, a second exodus was undertaken by about seventy of these black Hebrews. Their new destination was the State of Israel. "Permanent" residence in West Africa had turned out to be rather temporary settlement. Mr. Ben-Ammi, formerly Ben Carter, the spiritual leader of the black Hebrews, has insisted that Liberia was never regarded as their ultimate destination. From the start, it was intended to prepare them for their return to Israel.¹⁵ He and his followers had travelled to the wilderness of Liberia to cleanse themselves after their period of bondage in the United States as their Hebrew forefathers had wandered in the wilderness after their ordeal in Egypt. In Liberia they could throw off the shackles of "niggertism," Ben-Ammi stated at a public forum in Jerusalem in May, 1972.

Would the Hebrew Israelites have remained in Liberia had circumstances been different there? No definite answer can be given to this hypothetical question. Their difficulties notwithstanding, they were legally allowed to live in Liberia. They chose to leave. To be sure, they were not

11. *Liberian Star*, 4 November, 1969.

12. An article published in New York in a black nationalist periodical was sharply critical of the actions of the Liberian government. External pressures were suspected. See *African Opinion*, March-April, 1970.

13. *Liberian Star*, 14 November, 1969.

14. Nasi Ahsiel Ben Israel, Personal Interview, 15 November, 1972.

15. *Jerusalem Post*, 10 February, 1971.

urged to migrate to Israel by Israeli diplomats in Monrovia, as has been suggested. Ben-Ammi has said publicly that his "nation" did not just descend on Israel. The black Hebrews were in touch with Israeli embassy personnel in Liberia, but he admits that they never received a definite authorization from the embassy. They decided to go, anyway. It is conceivable that a handful of Israelis, private citizens who were working in Liberia, by giving rosy descriptions of their country, did encourage the blacks to go to Israel. At least one private citizen helped them to learn Hebrew.

In any event, late in 1969, the first contingents of black Hebrews landed at Lod Airport. Ben-Ammi informed the Israeli officials that they were bona fide Jews and were, therefore, entitled to Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return.¹⁶ That law, passed in 1950, confers upon Diaspora Jews an automatic right to return to Zion. Exceptions are limited to cases of individuals who are deemed to be security risks and to those who jeopardize the public health.

Because their religious credentials were unclear, the first two batches of black Hebrew Israelites were not immediately recognized as Jews. At the same time, their entitlement to entry into Israel under the Law of the Return was not categorically rejected. Pending investigation of their genealogical claims, final decision about their status was deferred and they were dispatched to Dimona and Arad, two Negev communities, where they were accorded the special privileges ordinarily reserved for immigrants. Dimona, with a population of about 27,000, including new *olim* from North Africa, India and Georgia in the Soviet Union, drew the bulk of the blacks. Subsequent platoons of Hebrew Israelites were also sent to the Negev, some to Mitzpeh Ramon and Jericho.

Non-white Jews were not complete strangers to the Israeli populace, a slight majority of whom are Oriental in origin and swarthy in appearance. Indian Jews, i.e., the Bene Israel, and some Falashas from Ethiopia were among the exiles who had been ingathered since the founding of the Jewish state. In addition, there are living in Israel a few black Americans whose conversion to Judaism is beyond question. But the Hebrew Israelites who adamantly refused to undergo conversion, which they deemed completely unnecessary, are sui generis among would-be immigrants to Israel. As such, they further complicated the already seemingly insoluble problem of determining who is a Jew. In the process, they have stimulated the curiosity of countless Israelis and Americans about blacks who are adherents of Judaism.

Relatively little has been written about the origins, characteristics and tenets of black Jewish sects.¹⁷ Actually, not much is known about

16. *New York Times*, 23 November, 1969.

17. The best known work on the subject is by Howard Brotz, *The Black Jews of Harlem—Negro Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Negro Leadership* (New York: Schocken, 1970).

their genesis. Nor are the black Jews, themselves, very helpful in this regard. When asked how long their families have been Jews or Israelites they are apt to answer, "We've always been Israelites but we didn't always know it."

Hebrew sects were clearly part of the black urban landscape in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere by the time of World War I. At least one, and very possibly more, of these sects antedated the turn of the century. Some were communitarian and led by self-styled "prophets," and ideology and ritual varied somewhat from congregation to congregation. Christian beliefs were often merged with those of Judaism to form a new syncretic faith, usually with black nationalist overtones.

How and why did black Americans come to identify themselves as Jews or Israelites? It is probable that such identification was based largely on the fact that Negroes, like the Hebrews of antiquity, had experienced the brutality and indignity of slavery. During the antebellum era, many black bondsmen drew an analogy between their own plight and that of the Israelites as described in the Old Testament. Plantation spirituals are replete with Scriptural names and places and these have been adduced by Ben-Ammi as proof of early awareness by blacks of their Israelite heritage.

Moreover, the same rejection of Christianity, washed white, as the religion of the Caucasian oppressor which helps to explain the black nationalist-black Muslim movement, may have predisposed some blacks to adopt Judaism. James Landing, a scholar who has studied black Jews in the Chicago area, is convinced that the black Jewish movement represents the first sectarian-based brand of black nationalism in the United States which was not explicitly Christian. Not only did it predate the Muslims, but it even anticipated the Muslims' immediate predecessor, the Moorish-Americans.

The Hebrew Israelites in Israel have repeatedly said that the ancient Hebrews were black, not white, a notion that has been shared by virtually all black Jewish sects. Initially, however, its greatest appeal was to black nationalist clerics who felt that it was self-deprecating for black people to portray deities and holy personalities as Caucasians. For example, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, of the independent black African Methodist Episcopal Church and the leading apostle of back-to-Africanism from the 1880's until his death in 1915, proclaimed that Christ in human form was black. A thorough-going black nationalist, Turner also declared that Adam, the first of the species had, himself, been black. For that matter, Turner, in the pages of his journal, *Voice of Missions*, claimed that "God is a Negro."¹⁸ James Morris Webb, another black

18. Edwin S. Redkey, ed. *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), pp. 176-177. Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus—*

minister, wrote unequivocally that Mary, the mother of Christ, "was born out of the tribe of Judah, a black tribe." Consequently, the blood of the Negro flowed through the veins of Jesus. David, too, had Negro ancestors and Daniel was described by Webb as "the black prophet."¹⁹ John E. Bruce, a devotee of black nationalist Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) wrote that Solomon, the wisest of men, was black.²⁰ George Alexander McGuire, Chaplain General of the U.N.I.A., as well as founder, first bishop and patriarch of the black independent African Orthodox Church, also propagated the belief that the Madonna and Christ were black. Today, Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., of the Shrine of the Black Madonna in Detroit, insists that Americans of African descent are actually God's chosen people in the Old Testament sense of that term. Cleage, also a black nationalist, has denied that the Nation Israel whose history is chronicled in the Bible was ever a white nation. In enunciating his black power theology, Cleage has described Jesus as "a revolutionary black leader . . . seeking to lead a black nation to freedom." Mary was a black woman, he has written, and Moses was nonwhite, too.²¹

Essentially, black Jews have belonged to this same school of religious thought. Rabbi Wentworth A. Matthew, founder and spiritual head of a sizeable Harlem congregation, the Commandment Keepers, commented in an interview published several years ago in a Negro newspaper: "The black man is a Jew because he is a direct lineal descendant of Abraham."²² The patriarchs, in his judgment, were undoubtedly black, and Rabbi Matthew has said flatly that all genuine Jews are black men. Prophet F. S. Cherry, who established the Church of God in Philadelphia, told his black followers that they were the Jews discussed in the Scriptures. Black people, he taught, were descended from Jacob, himself a black man. Because Jacob was known as Israel after he had wrestled with the angel, blacks ought to be referred to as Israelites.²³

Prophet William S. Crowdy, a chef on the Santa Fe Railroad who started another black Jewish sect in Kansas in 1896, revealed to his worshipful disciples that the Lost Tribes of Israel were the forbears of Ameri-

Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890-1910 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 182.

19. James Morris Webb, *The Black Man—The Father of Civilization* (Seattle: Acme Press, 1910), pp. 6-13 and James Morris Webb, *The Black Man Will Be The Coming Universal King Proven By Biblical History* (Chicago, 1919), pp. 10-13.

20. John E. Bruce, *Tracts for the People*, #14 n.d., p. 2.

21. Albert B. Cleage, Jr. *The Black Messiah* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), pp. 4, 40-41.

22. Quoted in Roi Ottley, "New World A-Coming"—*Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1943), p. 144. There are also black Jews who are of Falasha background and still others may be the descendants of blacks who were the slaves of Sefardic Jews in the West Indies.

23. Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis—Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), pp. 34-35.

can Negroes. At first, the ancient Hebrews were black, but through miscegenation had become white. This group celebrated Passover and utilized a Jewish calendar with Hebrew names for the months.²⁴ However, many of its precepts and practices were essentially Christian. It is significant that Crowdy's sect was officially called the Church of God and Saints of Christ. National headquarters were established in Philadelphia in 1900. Seventeen years later "international" headquarters were set up in Virginia and by the depression-ridden 1930's it could boast of having seven thousand members. The Hebrew Israelites in Dimona frequently allude to Crowdy who may have been the intellectual father to their movement.

Abundant evidence can be cited by black Jews to buttress their contention that Judaism and the Hebrew culture have deep roots in black Africa. In a short work written by Steven Jacobs and Rudolph Windsor, the authors aver that the Biblical, anthropological and archaeological sources all indicate that "from the time of Abraham, onward, black civilization and Hebrew civilization were synonymous."²⁵ Windsor is president of the Association of Black Israelites. According to the Jacobs-Windsor interpretation, the ancient Hebrews who migrated to Africa before 1650 B.C.E., were the ancestors of Afro-Americans both in terms of blood and culture. Abraham and his brethren were black in appearance. On the other hand, the white Jews of Europe and of the United States today bear little physical resemblance to the original Israelites from whom they do not descend biologically.

Black Hebrews, wherever they are found, subscribe more or less to this version of their past. After the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.), the Israelites fled to North Africa and to West Africa, Ben-Ammi has said. Centuries later, they were victims of the nefarious Atlantic slave trade and for more than four hundred years resided in the United States, which Ben-Ammi has labeled the "House of Captivity." During the epoch of slavery the displaced Africans were constantly reminded that they were Israelites.²⁶ Another spokesman for the Hebrew-Israelites in Israel has reported that in 1895, when Theodor Herzl launched the modern political Zionist movement, black Americans were raised from their graves to preach that they were the real descendants of the ancient Israelites.²⁷

24. Elmer J. Clark, *The Small Sects In America* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), pp. 188-190.

25. Steven Jacobs and Rudolph Windsor, *The Hebrew Heritage of Our West African Ancestors* (Wilmington, Delaware: Rose-Lee Inc., 1971), p. 2. The authors draw most of their information from an earlier book, Joseph J. Williams, *Hebrewisms of West Africa: From Nile to Niger With the Jews* (New York: The Dial Press, 1930). For additional information, see Rudolph R. Windsor, *From Babylon to Timbuctoo—A History of the Ancient Black Races Including The Black Hebrews* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973).

26. These statements have been excerpted from a tape recording of remarks made by Ben-Ammi at a public forum in Jerusalem on 10 May, 1972.

27. Nasi Ahsiel Ben Israel, Personal Interview, 15 November, 1972.

The black Hebrews in Israel call themselves a "nation," eschewing the word "sect" and taking umbrage at those who apply it to them. Believing themselves to be the descendants of all twelve tribes, they reject the term Jew as inappropriate because the tribe of Judah for which the Jews are named is just one of the twelve. In their view, all twelve tribes were black. On a number of occasions they have denied that most Israelis, Ashkenazim and Sefardim alike, can trace their family trees to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Revealing woeful ignorance of modern Jewish history, Ben-Ammi has declared that Caucasian Jews cannot trace their lineage to Israel prior to Herzl's time.²⁸

Suggestions that the Jewish inhabitants of Israel are not the true seed of Abraham, that they are impostors and that they are not the rightful inheritors of the land of Israel, have earned the blacks considerable enmity. To the beleaguered Israelis it is irksome enough to be continuously accused by the Arabs of being usurpers. To be told the same thing, in effect, by transplanted black Americans, is intolerable, and many of the troubles that have beset the black Hebrews in Israel are attributable to this simple fact: their genealogical beliefs or pretensions are directly in conflict with the historical concepts that undergird modern Zionism and the very existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

At the outset, very few Israelis knew of the blacks' pre-emptive claim to their country. Consequently, initially at least, the blacks were more of a curiosity than a problem. Virtually all of them in Dimona lived in one compound, a few families occupying each apartment because the government was loath to allot additional living space. There was also a meeting room and a small library in their cramped quarters. Mainly because work permits were frequently withheld, employment was difficult to procure. A few of the blacks worked in textiles or in construction, while some were self-employed, making jewelry and leather goods. They also formed a musical band which entertained throughout the country. Family and friends were another source of funds. Although the blacks said that money was a problem for them they did have sufficient money to charter buses for periodic trips to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Garbed in floor-length robes, the black Hebrews, male and female, were a colorful sight. Both sexes wore head coverings because "when they speak they are doing so before the Creator." Even the young children who seemed to abound wore distinctive dress. A number of the men, especially elderly ones, carried staffs. When greeting each other it was common for the men to kiss on both cheeks.

Puritanical in many respects, the blacks abstained from smoking and fasted on the Sabbath. They adhered strictly to the dietary laws of Kashrut and many were reputed to be vegetarians. In their way, they were exceedingly devout. Gatherings, even parties, often began with a

28. Tape, 10 May, 1972.

prayer. But they deviated from Judaism in that they accepted only the Torah, not the Talmud or Mishnah. They had no rabbis, and their leaders were often addressed as Nasi or prince.

Women's liberation has made no inroads among the Hebrew Israelites. It is abundantly clear that the place of a black Israelite woman is in the home. The two sexes congregate separately and men usually do not shake hands with women. One man will not enter a second's apartment if only the latter's wife is at home. In some of these prudish respects Hebrew Israelite practices resemble those of the Black Muslims. Another black Hebrew custom is worthy of note. When a woman is having her menstrual period a red string is attached to her door and her husband is forbidden to touch her.²⁹

The Hebrew Israelites converse in both English and Hebrew though fluency in the latter tongue varies greatly. Some knew Hebrew in America and added to their mastery of the language in Israel. They had their own classes in Hebrew at the Dimona Cultural Center and, interestingly, they also wanted to study Arabic there, but their request was rejected.

The United States may be out of sight, but it has not been completely out of the Hebrew Israelite mind. When this author visited the Dimona complex inhabited by the blacks, he found approximately twenty of the male members of the "nation" crowded into the corner of one apartment listening to a tape recording of the Muhammad Ali-Floyd Patterson heavyweight championship fight!

At first, despite overcrowded accommodations and a paucity of jobs, the blacks appeared to be faring well. Their children attended local schools and their Israeli neighbors accorded them a cordial welcome. Gabriel Katan, a Hebrew Israelite notable, once tearfully proclaimed that, "It is wonderful to be in a free country and be among one's own brothers who behave so kindly to you."³⁰

But the honeymoon was shortlived. After the arrival of a third wave of blacks, circumstances changed for the worse. In August, 1971, Ben-Ammi held a news conference at which he found fault with the job and housing situations and decried the "Jim Crow policies similar to what we left behind." A press release in the following month enumerated their manifold grievances. They had been "refused Medical Care, Equal Housing, Schooling and Birth Certificates for some 30 babies born in Israel." "Why," asked the press counselor for the black Hebrews "are others given apartments, and furnishings on their arrival, but Israelites

29. Traditional Jewish practice demands total avoidance of sexual contact of any kind during the wife's menstrual period and for seven days thereafter. However, in contrast to Hebrew Israelite practice, in traditional Judaism there are no visible indicators that a woman is undergoing menstruation as this is supposed to be the intimate information of husband and wife. See Leviticus 15: 19-32 and Leviticus 18: 19.

30. Shulamit Korn, "Dimona—A Black Misunderstanding" in *Jerusalem Post*, 15 October, 1971.

are denied them?" Others were given land and financial assistance to become self-reliant. Why, he inquired further, were these refused to the Hebrew Israelites? In short, why were they not granted the benefits of the Law of the Return? Why indeed?³¹

Israeli skepticism about the blacks' religious identity and the doubts which blacks voiced about the heritage and ethnic pedigree of most Israelis had fostered disharmony. In addition, a number of specific incidents had a decidedly chilling effect on Israeli-black Hebrew relations. For example, a Hebrew-Israelite protest demonstration in a Dimona supermarket in October, 1971, triggered a loud outcry. On that occasion the blacks entered the supermarket, proceeded to fill their shopping baskets with goods and then adamantly refused to pay. After the police arrived, the blacks left the premises quietly without the items that they had removed from the shelves.³² To this day they contend that they merely wanted to protest dramatically against their plight in Dimona. The fact that they had invited the press and a television camera team to witness their actions lends credence to the contention. Nonetheless, among the Israeli populace and perhaps in government circles also, the brief episode probably conjured up visions of racial friction and lawlessness, American-style. Relations between the Hebrew Israelites and their Israeli neighbors were soured further when some of the blacks illegally entered five vacant apartments reserved for new immigrants and, in effect, carried out a "sit-in," the avowed purpose of which was to underscore their shortage of living space. Again, they left only after the police appeared.

Contributing more than any other single incident to the deepening troubles of the Hebrew Israelites was a bloody confrontation which took place on the streets of Dimona between members of the Hebrew Israelite community and dissident blacks who had previously been expelled from their midst for wrongdoing. The clash resulted in the death of twenty-six year old Cornell Kirkpatrick, originally of Chicago. In connection with Kirkpatrick's death, five Hebrew Israelites were charged with manslaughter, were convicted, and then sentenced to prison terms ranging from six months to two years. It is ironic that the homicide and subsequent trial and convictions should have led to so much adverse publicity for the Hebrew Israelites. The banishment of the three "trouble-makers" had been prompted, in large measure, by the desire to improve the badly eroded public image of the Hebrew Israelites by purging the community of "thieves, wife-beaters and perverted people."³³

Racial strife in the United States in the 1960's had been given ex-

31. Press Release, September, 1971.

32. Korn, "Dimona . . ."

33. Aron Manheimer, "The Black Israelites of Dimona," Part II, *Davka*, Vol. II, No. 3 (May-June, 1972), pp. 48-53.

tensive coverage in the Israeli press. It is also possible that public opinion was molded to some degree by the prominence given to black anti-Semitism, real and imagined, in 1968–1969 during the New York City teachers' strike and its aftermath. Stories were widely circulated that rowdy black Hebrews were disturbing their neighbors by playing musical instruments into the early morning hours. In October, 1971, the chairman of the regional council in Mitzpeh Ramon, where there were approximately twenty black families, said that their children were a constant source of difficulty in school, and threatened to expel some fifteen youngsters.³⁴

Hostility to the Hebrew Israelites was simultaneously exploited and incited by Rabbi Meir Kahane, head of the Jewish Defense League (J.D.L.) who had settled in Israel. In the fall of 1971, Rabbi Kahane addressed seven hundred persons in a Dimona cinema and told his receptive audience that the blacks were not Jews. They were, instead, racists and anti-Semites who wished to bury Israel. Kahane wanted them deported from the country forthwith.³⁵ As a result of his appearance a number of Dimona's residents enrolled in the Jewish Defense League. Almost a year later, speaking in the ramshackle Hotel Zion in downtown Jerusalem, which served as headquarters for the J.D.L. in Israel, Kahane reiterated his strong opposition to the black Hebrews. He was convinced that they were "con men," "frauds," "vicious Jew haters, psychopaths and dangerous people" who had migrated to Israel because they believed that Jews could be relied upon to help poor blacks. He thought it possible that they would cause trouble for Israel by linking up with dissatisfied Oriental immigrants, the so-called Israeli Black Panthers, and with local leftists.³⁶

Hebrew Israelite leaders were adding incalculably to their own difficulties by broadcasting wildly extravagant figures on the numbers of black "Jews" in the United States. Ben-Ammi, in a nation-wide television interview, said that there were between two and fifteen million black Hebrews. One million of them were preparing to return home to Israel in the near future.³⁷ Precise census data on black "Jews" in the United States do not exist, but estimates of 25,000³⁸ to 40,000³⁹ would certainly be closer to reality. The *Negro Almanac*, published in 1971, puts the figure at 44,000.⁴⁰ As recently as July, 1973 a black rabbi, Abel Respes, spiritual head of Temple Adet Beyt Mosheh in Elmwood,

34. *Jerusalem Post*, 19 October, 1971.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Personal Interview, 20 November, 1972.

37. Korn, "Dimona . . ."

38. This is the estimate of James Landing, an associate professor of Geography at the University of Illinois (Chicago Circle). He has been studying the black Jews of Chicago.

39. This is the estimate of Robert T. Coleman, formerly Director of the Department of Social Justice of the Synagogue Council of America.

40. Harry A. Ploski and Ernest Kaiser (eds.), *The Negro Almanac* (New York: The Bellweather Co., 1971), p. 908.

New Jersey, stated that he had just about relinquished the hope of persuading blacks to accept Judaism⁴¹ after a quarter of a century of proselytizing.

Israeli authorities must have recognized Ben-Ammi's figures on his black co-religionists for what they are: nonsensical hyperbole. Still, they may have suspected that there was a substantial reservoir of Hebrew Israelites in the United States ready and waiting to emigrate to the promised land. Already upset by the presence of a small body of blacks who regarded lighter skinned Jews as mountebanks, the Israeli government would have viewed with dismay the possibility of a mass black Hebrew aliyah. Even individual immigration of black Hebrews was looked upon askance.

By 1972, relations between the Hebrew Israelites and officials in Dimona were strained to the breaking point. Local Histadrut functionaries were at odds with the Afro-Americans, and the mayor refused to appear on the same platform with them at the annual Independence Day ceremonies. In his antipathy, the mayor seemed to reflect the sentiments of his constituents. Words of sympathy and/or support for the Hebrew Israelites in Dimona were expressed only by a couple of social workers, one of whom believed that American Jewish fears of blacks had been transferred to Israel. It was also his opinion that there was a serious problem of communications. For example, the blacks, who often speak symbolically and figuratively, had told a former mayor that his time would come. He construed the remark as a threat on his life. It was the judgment of another social worker that the Soviet Georgian immigrants caused him more headaches than did the blacks. And this was his feeling months before about two thousand disgruntled Georgians laid siege to Ashdod and virtually paralyzed that port city in July, 1973.⁴² But few Israelis shared the social workers' generally positive attitude toward the Hebrew Israelites. Seventy-eight per cent of Israelis polled by a Hebrew language paper wanted them deported from the country.⁴³

Early in 1972, a member of the opposition Gahal bloc, Menachem Yedid, told the Knesset of the woes of the residents of Dimona, woes ascribable to the Hebrew Israelites. People who dwelt in that Negev town did so in fear and suffering. Murder had occurred there once and it might occur again. The blacks were challenging the rights of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. Yedid called for an investigation

41. *Afro-American*, 21 July, 1973.

42. An interesting coincidence is that seven of the Georgians, a people who require strictly decorous behavior on the part of their women, killed a youthful Arab male in Nazareth. He had been found in a parked car in the company of a Georgian woman. As a punishment she was forced to shave her head. The incident did not cause a furor comparable to that evoked by the killing of Cornell Kirkpatrick in Dimona.

43. Clark Kent, "Dashikis in the Promised Land," *Israel Horizons*, May-June 1972, p. 11.

to determine if foreign, anti-Israeli elements were backing or exploiting the Hebrew Israelites.⁴⁴ A few months earlier, government sources had revealed that a probe was already underway to ascertain if forces hostile to Israel had fostered the movement of black Hebrews to Israel,⁴⁵ but no proof that black Hebrew actions had been instigated by the enemies of Israel has ever been discovered, though there was one half-hearted Arab attempt to take advantage of Israel's discomfit in grappling with the dilemma of the blacks. The head of a delegation of Egyptian socialists at a convention in Rome said that black Hebrews who were ousted from their "abode" in the Jewish state would be welcome in Egypt.⁴⁶

Possibly in 1971, if not before, the government of Israel decided to solve the problem of the Hebrew Israelites by ridding itself of them. This decision was probably made at the highest governmental level, i.e., by Prime Minister Golda Meir herself. There were some in the Interior Ministry who favored a wholesale expulsion. They had wished to cut the Gordian knot in this fashion from the day the blacks first set foot on Israeli soil. However, largely for reasons of public relations, the government opted for Fabian tactics of attrition. The problem would be attacked piecemeal. No new Hebrew Israelites would be admitted to the country, those who left for any reason whatsoever would not be allowed to re-enter, and those whose visas expired would be required to leave. Additional pressure was to be exerted on the blacks by not making work permits and apartments available. When twenty-one Afro-Americans flew into Lydda Airport in October, 1971, to join the Negev blacks, they were turned away. In the first six or seven months of 1972, approximately sixty-five Hebrew Israelites were repatriated to the United States, a small percentage at United States government expense. Some left Israel reluctantly. Others informed the American embassy that they had been kept in the black community by force, alleging that they had been beaten and had had their heads shaved for wanting to leave. In November, 1972, a spokesman for the Ministry of the Interior said that there were still about two hundred Hebrew Israelites in the whole country.⁴⁷ Since that time their ranks have been further depleted, due to the government policy.

44. *Jerusalem Post*, 27 January, 1972. The Mayor of Dimona told a writer for *Ma'ariv* that one hundred and fifty French-speaking Jewish families did not want to settle in Dimona because of the blacks. Some people had allegedly left Dimona because of distress engendered by the blacks. One woman is supposed to have had two miscarriages because she was so upset by the blacks. See Eli Ayal, "Dynamite in Dimona," *Ma'ariv*, 6 April, 1973.

45. *Jerusalem Post*, 8 October, 1971. Concern about an international conspiracy has been nurtured by the allegation that the blacks correspond with China and have Chinese books.

46. Ruth Cale, "Israel Grapples With A 'Black Hebrew' Problem," *Baltimore Sun*, 6 November, 1971.

At the beginning of 1973, the Israeli High Court of Justice handed down a decision very harmful to the Hebrew Israelite cause. The petitioners were an eight-member family belonging to the sect, who had come to Israel in September, 1971, and had been granted three-month tourist visas. When the visas expired a request for renewal was denied and their expulsion was ordered. They next appealed to the Minister of the Interior who ruled that, as tourists, they had no vested right to remain in Israel. The Law of the Return did not apply to them. The petitioners then carried their appeal to the High Court of Justice. Simply stated, their position was that they were scions of Abraham and that they were faithful to the Laws of Moses and of Israel as set forth in the Torah. Although their counsel conceded that his clients were not Jewish in the usual sense of the term, they were Jewish enough to qualify for entry under the Law of the Return.

Justice Berinson, speaking for the Court, rejected this argument. Tourists, unlike Israeli citizens and immigrants under the Law of the Return, are not entitled to permanent residence in the country. All countries, he observed, exercise the right to bar foreigners or to expel non-citizens whose presence is not desirable, and some nations do not even give reasons for their verdicts regarding entry and residence.

As far as the petitioners' entitlement to the benefits of the Law of the Return was concerned, Justice Berinson indicated that a Jew was legislatively defined (1970) as a "person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and who is not a member of another religion." Although the Hebrew Israelites follow the laws of the Torah, they do not accept the other books of the Bible. Therefore, it could not be said that they believed in the Jewish religion as it had evolved over generations. Justice Berinson stated that no legal conclusions could be reached about their Hebrew roots. In addition, he discountenanced the idea that members of the Hebrew Israelite nation had mothers who would qualify as Jews. He concluded that the Hebrew Israelites had always been isolated from the traditions, culture and heritage of Judaism and did not fall within the definition of Jew as far as the Law of the Return is concerned. However, it is interesting that he did recommend that the respondent, the Minister of the Interior, might reconsider the possibility of permitting the petitioners to stay in Israel with the other black Hebrews, as they were already in the country.⁴⁸ Of course, in the light of government policy, that recommendation was ignored by the Minister of the Interior.

47. Personal Interview, Yitzhak Agassi, 20 November, 1972. A few days earlier, Nasi Ahsiel Ben Israel said that there were about 550 black Hebrews in Israel, 250 in Dimona alone.

48. For further details of the decision see: Doris Lankin, "Law Report—Leonie Clark and others v. Minister of the Interior," *Jerusalem Post*, 9 January, 1973.

The Hebrew Israelites are convinced that their presence in Israel is an integral part of a divine plan. They say that Israel, unlike other countries, is holy land, which will "spit out unrighteous governments" such as the one currently in power. They believe they are the vanguard of the coming messianic age. In a press conference held on Mt. Zion, the blacks spoke of plagues that would befall Israel and the western world and prophesied that Israeli planes would fall from the skies. In May, 1972, Ben-Ammi predicted that there would be a war in the Middle East and that blood would flow. He talked about a takeover of the government and the establishment of a new kingdom. He used many parables in his remarks, but it is not unlikely that he was taken literally by his audience. In the opinion of the Hebrew Israelites the final cataclysm will come in 1977, which will mark the millennium. Then, the Hebrew Israelites, in conjunction with all men of righteousness, white and black alike, will control the world's spiritual powers.

Feeling more and more isolated, the Hebrew Israelites, in 1972, hoped to broaden their base of support. To that end, they planned a Jerusalem summit to which black Americans and black Africans were invited. In their invitation to Kenyon C. Burke, a black who serves as an Urban Affairs consultant to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Hebrew Israelites likened themselves to the David of ancient Israel in challenging the world's Goliath. They charged that during

the past several decades prophets, scholars, archaeologists, anthropologists and many renown [sic] historians have labored to cover up an international, diabolical plot to deceive the world. The greatest conspiracy ever conceived in the minds of men was the creation of a National Homeland for Jewish People.⁴⁹

As discord between themselves and the government deepened, the blacks became progressively vitriolic in their statements about Zionism and about the State of Israel. Their press counselor inveighed against "the great international religious conspiracy against the Hebrew Israelites and the black people in America,"⁵⁰ a comment that could easily be construed as anti-Jewish. A flyer, printed by the blacks and distributed in the United States, reflected their burgeoning indignation and frustration. It accused the "Israel Racist Government" of refusing re-entry to a black American, Gavriel Ben Israel, on April 18, 1973, and called for a boycott of all "Jewish Businesses that support Israel, until Black Americans—Hebrew Israelites—are permitted Free Entry like all other people into the Holy Land."

Written in the same mood of irritation was a public letter dated May 4, 1973, in which the Hebrew Israelites claimed that the human rights of black Americans living in Israel had been violated. Other

49. Shaleak Ben Yehuda to Kenyon C. Burke, 31 July, 1972.

50. Ashkeazehr Ben Yisrael to Arnold Forster, 22 March, 1973.

putative violations of human rights were the revocations of visas, the denial of work permits and the crowding of families into apartments with sixteen to twenty people. Not only were the Hebrew Israelites living under the "most deplorable and unhuman conditions ever," but they were "isolated from the outside world and living in a state of terror and siege." Israel was, in fact, the "most racist place in the world for black Americans."

The unhappy saga of the black Hebrews' odyssey is slowly drawing to a close. Their days in Israel are numbered and there is every reason to believe that virtually all will be back in the United States in a year or two. It can be said with certainty that they are not the "con men" or "frauds" that Rabbi Kahane believes them to be. They are not the dangerous "subversives" many others think them to be. They are, rather, black nationalist religious zealots who have been victimized by their own zealotry which rendered them unassimilable and unacceptable in a Jewish state.

Mixed Marriage and Reform Rabbis

ALLEN S. MALLER

IN JUNE OF 1973, THE REFORM RABBINICAL association once again debated the question of performing mixed marriages. In 1909, the Central Conference of American Rabbis had declared that mixed marriages were contrary to the tradition of the Jewish religion and should be discouraged. In 1947, the issue was redebated and the original position reaffirmed. Then, in 1962, the report of the Special Committee on Mixed Marriage of the C.C.A.R. was that

The C.C.A.R. further declares that it is the sacred duty of the rabbi to insist that mixed couples receive a thorough instruction in Judaism prior to their marriage and that they reach a firm premarital agreement on the religious climate of the home and the rearing of the children.

The resolution, which implied an easement of the earlier stand, was not enacted. At present, at least 20 percent, and perhaps as many as 30 to 40 percent, of Reform rabbis will perform mixed marriages, although their standards vary considerably.¹

At the 1973 convention, the resolution of the Committee on Mixed Marriage declared its opposition to any ceremony which solemnizes such a marriage. But it also called on those members who dissent from this position to

refrain from officiating at a mixed marriage unless the couple agrees to undertake, prior to marriage, a course of study of Judaism equivalent to that required for conversion, (and to) refrain from co-officiating or sharing with non-Jewish clergy in the solemnization of a mixed marriage.

The first paragraph of the resolution, opposing a ceremony for a mixed marriage, was passed 321 to 196. The second paragraph, quoted in part, above, was sent back to committee. Thus, the attempt to legitimize and regularize non-halakhic marriage had failed again.

* * *

A study by the Bureau of Vital Statistics of the Department of Health of the State of California provides us with some important

1. There is no generation gap in the argument on performing mixed marriages. Nor is there an historical swing in either direction. A survey by Louis Mann in 1937, which was answered by 74% of the C.C.A.R. membership, reveals that 67% did not perform mixed marriages, 26% did, provided that the couple pledged to raise the children as Jews, and 7% performed ceremonies without even this pledge. For some indication of the varieties of standards today, see: A.S. Maller and M.L. Raphael, "The Cost of Mixed Marriages," *CCAR Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2, April 1971, pp. 83-85.

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evidence. In 1971, 143,664 reports were filed in California for divorce, annulment or separate maintenance. Of these, 4,828 involved Jews. However, 2,586 (53 percent) involved a Jew married to a Gentile. Since the mixed marriage rate in the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's, when almost all of these marriages took place, was probably under 18 percent, and surely no more than 20 to 25 percent, the divorce ratio of 53 percent is two to three times as high as proportionately it should be.

Studies involving Protestant-Catholic mixed marriages indicate that the above average divorce rate is somewhat reduced (by 25%) if one partner converts to the religion of the other.² The number of Jews involved in those studies was too small to draw any similar conclusions. Inasmuch as the differences between Christianity and Judaism are much larger than those between Protestantism and Catholicism, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the unification of a family where one spouse was Jewish and the other spouse Christian should reduce the chances for divorce by at least 25 percent, and probably by 30 to 40 percent or more. In the absence of a conversion, a clear and definite premarital agreement would help reduce some of the problems, as research indicates that the primary reason given for marital strife in a mixed marriage is fighting over the religious identity and education of the children.³ There is evidence that many mixed marriage couples remain childless in order to avoid the conflict that often arises when the children come. According to the 1957 survey made by the Census Bureau, there were 880 children under 14 years per 1,000 married couples, both of whom were Jewish, and only 459 such children per 1,000 married couples when only one of the spouses was Jewish. Thus, in terms of marital success, a Jew is best off marrying another Jew. If a Jew wants to marry a Gentile, the best solution is to unify the family through conversion. I refer to such marriages as *Mizvah* Marriages. First of all, it is a *Mizvah* if the Jewish partner is strong enough in identity and in loyalty to the Jewish community to be able to bring a Gentile under the wings of the *Shekhinah*. Secondly, it is a *Mizvah* because it helps reduce the chance of divorce and, therefore, strengthens the family. Finally, it is a *Mizvah* because, as will be indicated later, studies show that the convert is a better-than-average Jew, and, therefore, raises the level of dedication within the Jewish community.

If a couple cannot unify their home through the conversion of the Gentile, then they should reach a clear and definite agreement concerning the identity and education of their children. If they cannot

2. J. T. Landis, "Marriages of Mixed and Non-Mixed Religious Faith," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 14, 1949, pp. 401-7.

3. A. J. Prince, "A Study of 194 Cross-Religion Marriages," *The Family Life Coordinator*, Vol. II, 1962.

do even this, then I would estimate that the chances of divorce, within ten years of their marriage, are probably fifty-fifty. In such a circumstance, it might be better for them simply to live together, and not have children, until such time as they can solve their differences. Although most Americans, influenced by Christianity, believe that premarital sex is a great sin, the Jewish tradition opposes a mixed marriage with much greater vigor. To perform a Jewish ceremony for a couple simply because her parents are "bugging" them, when in reality they have no commitment to establishing a Jewish home, is to sell a plastic shame mitigator.

When we turn to the sociological literature on mixed marriage and Jewish survival, we find that most of it is of little use, because until recently most of the researchers (who are secularists) did not differentiate between mixed marriages and Mizvah marriages. They either lumped both together as intermarriage, or they included the Mizvah marriage group in the Jewish group. This is correct from the halakhic point of view, but not from the demographic one. In terms of numbers, let us assume that 4 Jews marry out. One of the marriages is a Mizvah marriage, and 3 are mixed marriages. The 1 Mizvah marriage has 2 children, which results in an increase of 3 in the Jewish population. This compensates for the 3 Jews in the mixed marriage. If these 3 mixed marriages produce 6 children, and only 1 of these children identifies as a Jew, then even in the second generation, the 4 Jews who married out will have left behind 3 Jewish children, for a net loss of 1. If 2 of the 4 had been Mizvah marriages, there would have been no loss at all. It is, therefore, vital to distinguish between Mizvah marriages and mixed marriages and to keep clearly in mind the ratio between the two.

A recent study by Leonard Fein found that of all exogamous marriages in the Boston area, the Mizvah marriage rate is 24 percent, and the mixed marriage rate is 76 percent.⁴ A long-range planning study of twelve Reform congregations found that 24 percent of those young people willing to marry out would do so only if the Gentile were willing to become Jewish. Another study, in Providence, Rhode Island, indicated that the proportion of Mizvah marriages has been steadily rising from decade to decade. "Only one-fourth of the mixed marriages of the foreign born resulted in conversion of the non-Jewish spouse, compared to over half of the intermarriages involving third generation males."⁵ A study by Bernard Lazerwitz in Chicago, in 1967,

4. L. J. Fein, "Some Consequences of Jewish Intermarriage," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 33, 1971, pp. 44-59.

5. Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 159.

found a Mizvah marriage ratio of 20 percent.⁶ His study is based on a sample taken from random housing units, while the Providence study is based on lists provided by the Jewish community. Thus, the difference between the low figure of 20 percent and the high figures of 40 to 50 percent represents the greater tendency of Mizvah marriages couples to be affiliated with the Jewish community. Lazerwitz's excellent study also indicates that such couples are above average in emphasizing the importance of Jewish education for their children, while mixed marriage couples are below average. On the Zionist index, the converts and their spouses again are the leaders. The best solution to the problem of mixed marriages, then, is to raise the proportion of Mizvah marriages to 50 percent.⁷

There are several ways that this can be done. First, we must educate our people on the Mizvah of *gerut*. We may not be missionaries in terms of strangers, but in cases involving the unification of a family and the preservation of Jewish loyalty within a family, it is a Mizvah to do as much as is possible to draw the Gentile into the community of Israel. All too often, I have encountered non-Jews who felt that their Jewish fiancés (or fiancées), or their prospective in-laws, did not really care whether they became Jewish. The normal reluctance of many Jews to push conversion is frequently interpreted by Gentiles, not as evidence of liberalism, but, rather, as evidence of a lack of acceptance. Second, we must educate the children in our schools by letting them meet people who are *Gerei Zedek* and by honoring famous *Gerei Zedek* of the past. Lazerwitz indicates that ". . . the spouses of converts report a considerable amount of Jewish education, while the spouses of Christians report much less. The two groups differ very little in Jewish home background." My own research has indicated a similar finding. Of 65 Jewish girls engaged to Gentiles, I found that those with little or no Jewish education were unlikely to undertake the course of study I require and to be committed to raising their children as Jews. Only 7 out of 22 with little or no education met my requirements, 10 out of 20 with some education (2 to 5 years)

6. Bernard Lazerwitz, "Intermarriage and Conversion," *Journal of Jewish Sociology*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1971, pp. 41-63.

7. Most studies simply ask your attitude to mixed marriage without differentiating between all the possible answers: wouldn't date, date but not marry, marry but only if other converts, not necessary to convert but children must be reared in my religion, require none of above (mixed marriage), willing to convert to mate's religion. The only study to reach this level of sophistication is by a Gentile, R. S. Caven, "Social Distance and Intermarriage," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 10 No. 2, 1971. She finds that 28% of Reform Jewish college students would want their mate to convert, compared to 39% of Conservative Jewish students. Thirteen percent of Reform Jews were willing to marry with no commitment either to convert or to raise their children as Jews, as compared to only 7% of Conservative Jews who were uncommitted. (p. 97).

did so, while 14 out of 23 of those with confirmation (or 7 to 10 years of Jewish education) did so. While Jewish education makes a difference, secular education seems to have no influence at all. Among college graduates, it was 5 to 5; among those with some college, it was 11 to 13; among high school graduates, it was 8 to 8, and among those who were currently college students, it was 7 to 8. Thus, increasing Jewish education, and concentrating in particular on emphasizing the Mizvah of *gerut*, should lead to an increase in the Mizvah marriage ratio.

Finally, we should expand the number of conversion classes and improve their quality. Of those who entered the Introduction to Judaism class in Los Angeles in 1968 and 1969, only 50 percent completed it. We wouldn't tolerate a drop-out rate like that in Hebrew school or in confirmation class. Isn't this as important, if not more, than those classes?⁸ In addition, we as rabbis must be willing to meet every couple and to try to draw them into the community. Too many rabbis simply say no over the phone when they are asked if they will perform a mixed marriage. This usually means that the couple will end up being married by one of the men who will officiate for anyone who pays the fee. In Los Angeles, the man who performs the most mixed marriages recommends fewer students to the Introduction to Judaism class than do most of the rabbis, including those who do not perform mixed marriages.

But when almost all is said and done, when the rabbi has tried everything, and the Gentile still does not want to become Jewish, what still should be done? This is the difficult issue currently before us. Does a rabbi who performs a marriage in this case increase or decrease the chances that the couple will establish a Jewish home and will raise their children to be loyal and active members of the Jewish community? The sociological evidence is sparse. As I have already indicated, it is only very recently that researchers have begun to differentiate between Mizvah and mixed marriages. The National Jewish Population Study, upon my urging, has included a question concerning the type of marriage ceremony performed and, for the first time, we soon will have statistics which will indicate the relationship between type of ceremony and identity of children. It should be pointed out that any correlation that is established is not a casual one but may be a predictive one. That is to say, couples that come to a rabbi seeking to be married in a Jewish ceremony may be significantly different in their commitments and concerns from couples who are married in civil or Christian ceremonies. It may also be possible that they are not initially so different, and that the personal contact with a rabbi

8. A. S. Maller, "From Gentile to Jew," *Reconstructionist*, Vol. 33, June 23, 1967, pp. 24-27.

and the period of study that he engages them in may help turn them in a more Jewish direction.

In order to test these two theses, as well as to gather additional evidence about Jewish-Gentile marriage in general, I carried out two small studies in the spring of 1972 and the spring of 1973. The 45 Jewish-Gentile marriages that I studied are not representative because they were not gathered in a random fashion, nor do they represent a proportional sample of the universe of Jewish-Gentile marriages (we do not know enough about the demographic characteristics of such marriages to construct a proportional sample). We cannot, therefore, draw any conclusions from this sample and apply them to the general population. We can, however, compare the various segments within the sample to each other, as there is no reason to believe that the way in which the sample was gathered will bias these characteristics.

In May of 1973, the UCLA Alumni Monthly carried a notice which I had placed in it asking couples involved in Jewish-Gentile marriages to call me. I subsequently realized that the wording of the notice had not encouraged a response from people who had been involved in a mixed marriage which ended in divorce (only 3 of the 39 who responded were divorced), so I added to the sample another group of 13 interviews that had been gathered the previous year by a social worker acting under my direction who had interviewed a number of colleagues and friends (6 of the 13 were divorced). Of the 45 couples whose complete and appropriate interviews were obtained, 4 were Mizvah marriages (3 wives and 1 husband converted to Judaism), 1 was an apostate marriage (Jewish girl converting to Christianity), and 40 were mixed marriages. Although the Mizvah marriages are Jewish marriages from the halakhic point of view, I include them in our sample in order to compare them with couples who were married by rabbis but without conversion.

Of the 45 couples, 26 were Jewish males and 19 were Jewish females. The 58% plurality of Jewish males is below most previous samples, which usually found about 65 to 75% to be Jewish males. The 4 to 1 ratio of the preliminary reports of the National Jewish Population Study seems too high. There is some reason to believe that the proportion of Jewish females marrying out has risen significantly in the last 5 to 10 years. Only 1 of the Jewish girls had been married prior to 1960, compared to 7 of the Jewish boys. In the decade 1960-69, 11 Jewish girls married, compared to 14 Jewish males. In the period 1970-73, 7 Jewish girls married, compared to 5 Jewish boys. Thus, in my sample there was a significant increase in the percentage of Jewish girls marrying Gentile boys. Rabbi David Max Eichhorn reports that, in the six years between 1966 and 1972 he performed 516 intermarriages in which the Jewish females outnumbered the Jewish

males, 54.9% to 46%.⁹ Rabbi Irwin Fishbein, basing his conclusions on the over 400 Jewish-Gentile marriages that he had contact with, in a period of ten years, stated that Jewish males outnumbered Jewish females by 3 to 1 in the period 1962-66, that the ratio fell to only 9 to 8 in the years 1967-69, and that in 1970-71 the proportions were reversed and Jewish girls exceeded Jewish boys by 3 to 2.¹⁰ These reports, like all those based on people who come to rabbis to be married, have an above-average percentage of Jewish girls, since women are the ones who usually arrange the wedding.

When we analyse these couples by the type of marriage ceremony that was performed, we find that there has been no significant change in the ratios of the three ceremonies. In the pre-1960 period, 4 were married in civil ceremonies, 2 in Christian ceremonies, and 2 in Jewish ceremonies. In the decade of the 60's, the ratio was 13 civil, 5 Christian, and 7 Jewish. In the period between 1970 and mid-'73, the ratio was 6, 3 and 3. Thus, about half of all ceremonies continued to be civil ones, with the remaining half roughly split between Christian and Jewish.

To what extent is the type of ceremony performed indicative of the characteristics of the Jews involved in mixed marriages and to what extent is it predictive of the eventual Jewish or non-Jewish identity of their children? A scale was constructed which rated each Jewish partner's Jewish education: 1—none or little; 2—some (three to five years, Bar Mitzvah); or 4—confirmation, or six to ten years of Jewish education. Those married in a civil ceremony scored 1.5, those married in a Christian ceremony scored 1.4, while those married in a Jewish ceremony scored 2.1 on this Jewish education scale. Specifically, for Jewish males, the scores were: civil ceremony—1.7, Christian ceremony—2.0, Jewish ceremony 2.25 (2.6 for Mitzvah marriages and 2.0 for mixed marriages). For Jewish females, the figures are 1.3, 0.8, and 2.0. It is reasonable to expect that those who wished to be married by a rabbi would have a higher Jewish commitment and education than those who did not so choose. There does not seem to be much difference in the Jewish education of those married in civil versus Christian ceremonies. Probably the strength of the Gentile's Christianity is more important in the decision for a church wedding.

Christensen and Barber, in their study of marriages in Indiana, found that Jews marrying Gentiles were characterized by a higher average age than were Jews marrying Jews.¹¹ This was partly due to

9. The figures for Eichhorn are from a letter which he wrote to the *National Jewish Post and Opinion*. His experiences, as well as those of Rabbi Fishbein, are in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area.

10. *CCAR Journal*, Spring 1973, p. 34.

11. H. T. Christensen and K. Barber, "Interfaith vs. Intrafaith Marriage in Indiana," *Marriage and Family Living*, Vol. 29, (August 1967); pp. 461-9.

the higher percentage of re-marriages among the mixed marriages. 7 of the 45 marriages in my sample were second marriages for the Jews involved. 6 of these had been married in civil ceremonies. There was no significant difference between males and females in terms of proportion of re-marriages. The percentage of re-marriages is below average. The age at time of first marriage is only slightly above average for people with the secular educational attainments in my sample. Thus, neither factor seems to have any significance in this area.

I was also able to gather data on the marital patterns of the siblings of those who had married Gentiles. There was no significant difference either by sex, or by type of ceremony performed, although the total percentage of mixed marriages among the siblings ran to 25%. This would seem to indicate that there is a tendency for Jewish-Gentile marriage to be more prevalent in certain families than others. Whether this is due to the psycho-dynamics of these families, as Berman has suggested,¹² or whether it is due to their social and/or Jewish marginality as I have suggested,¹³ or whether it is simply due to the fact that there is less resistance when a taboo has already been broken, cannot presently be ascertained. It is probably a combination, in varying degrees, of all three factors.

Another question asked concerned the percentage of inter-faith dating in the years preceeding marriage. A Jew who dates mostly, or almost entirely, Gentiles should be expected to marry one. On the other hand, a Jew who dates 90% or more within the Jewish community probably will not marry a Gentile. Without knowing the percentage of Jews who either do, or do not, marry Gentiles, we cannot make a comparison. In our sample, dating practices showed hardly any difference between Jewish males and Jewish females. Nor was there any significant difference in dating practices by type of ceremony performed. Nor was there any correlation between the Jewish education scale and high or low inter-faith dating percentages.

The most significant question for those concerned with the survival of the Jewish community relates to the manner in which the children are being raised. Since over a quarter of the sample have been married less than four years, it is not surprising to find that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the couples are still childless. Jewish men married in civil ceremonies are raising only 2 out of 21 children as Jews. Of those married in Christian ceremonies, 0 of 12 is being raised as a Jew. Of those who were married by rabbis, 8 out of 11 are being raised as Jews. 4 of these 8 are the children of converts, so that only 4 out of 7 children of parents married by rabbis without conversion are being raised as Jews. For Jewish girls, the figures are

12. Louis Berman, *Jews and Inter-marriage*, (N.Y., Thomas Yoseloff, 1968).

13. A. S. Maller, "New Facts About Mixed Marriage," *Reconstructionist*, Vol. 35, March 21, 1969, pp. 26-29.

less clear. Only 1 out of 9 children from the civil marriages is being raised as a Jew. For Christian marriages, it is 0 out of 6. Of the 4 Jewish girls married by a rabbi, 3 are still childless. The 1 whose husband became Jewish is raising her 2 children as Jews. The overall totals are as follows: 23% of the children of Jewish men who marry out are being raised as Jews, compared with 18% for Jewish girls. If we exclude the converts and look only on the mixed marriages, regardless of ceremony performed, we find that only 15% of the children of Jewish men and 7% of the children of Jewish women are being raised as Jews.

These figures are way below those of the preliminary report of the National Jewish Population Study, which found that 63.3% of the children of Jewish men involved in intermarriages were being raised as Jews. But this figure includes the children of the Mizvah marriages (26% of the Gentile wives have converted to Judaism) as well as the children of the mixed marriages. Even if we subtract the 26.7%, we are still left with a figure of about 30 to 40% of the children of Jewish men in mixed marriages being raised as Jews. While this figure is higher than that reported by any previous study it is not impossible. However, the N.J.P. Study's claim that 98% of the children of Jewish wives with Gentile husbands (only 2.5% of whom have converted) are being raised as Jews is incredible. No study of anything involving two or three roughly free choices yields a 49 to 1 majority.

Inasmuch as the N.J.P. Study was an explicitly Jewish survey, it is probably that, in the context of the questions, many people avoided giving answers which would embarrass either themselves or the interviewer. By contrast, my survey was cloaked in neutrality and I interviewed almost as many of the Gentile spouses as I did the Jewish spouses. Also, the N.J.P. Study dealt with a large number of mixed marriages that had only recently occurred and were as yet childless. Finally, much depends on the criteria that are used for evaluating the Jewishness of a child. Several people told me that they intended to raise their children in a bi-cultural environment. A Jewish girl married to a Chicano indicated as much. But since they live in the Barrio, speak Spanish in the home, and have mostly Latin friends, I did not feel that it was realistic to consider her children's future identity as Jewish. Many respondents indicated that they celebrated both Jewish and Christian holidays either in the home or with their families. In the absence of a strong commitment to Jewish education, or to informal Jewish experiences such as summer camping or Zionist youth groups, I did not consider these children to fall within the Jewish category. In the case of those who were teenagers or older, I accepted self-identification, although it was clear that the identification was rather marginal, since only one had received any Jewish education.

In summary, it would seem that those couples who come to a rabbi

to be married are more likely to raise their children as Jews than are those who are married in civil or church ceremonies. It would also seem that being married by a rabbi is rarely a determining factor in this decision. A Jewish girl who couldn't find a rabbi to perform her ceremony was married by a Unitarian minister. She still plans to raise her children as Jews and, in fact, I believe that her difficulty in arranging for a Jewish ceremony added a little extra guilt which is now being relieved by her determination to have Jewish children. A Catholic girl, who was married in Chicago by both a priest and a rabbi, felt that the rabbi, who had not even met with her, much less taught her, prior to the ceremony, did not take the whole thing seriously.¹⁴ Another couple was quite upset over the high fee that they were charged, especially since at that time there was no other rabbi who would perform such a service.

If a rabbi is willing to meet with a couple on at least eight or ten occasions, or the couple is willing to undertake a course of study similar to that for conversion, there is some chance that the direction of their home will be affected. Even this depends on the Jewish family's eagerness to bring the Gentile partner into the Jewish community. Simply to perform a ceremony with only one or two prior meetings and with no institutional involvement, seems to have little effect on the couple's future direction.

14 A list of 120 rabbis who perform mixed marriages, issued in December 1973, by the Rabbinic Center for Research and Counseling, lists 7 men who will perform marriages together with non-Jewish clergy, in a Christian church or chapel, and 20 others who will do so if there are no references to Christianity or no visible Christian symbols. All of the 7 will perform this "Jewish" ceremony even though the couple has no commitment to establish a Jewish home or to raise their children as Jews. Only a few of the 20 others require this basic commitment. Of the 93 men listed who state their requirements (27 do not), 33 will marry a couple who have no commitment to raise their children as Jews.

The Advisability of Seeking Converts

GILBERT KOLLIN

"You (Pharisees) sail the seas and cross whole countries to win one convert . . ." (Matthew 23:15).

"Bestow your mercies, O Lord our God, upon the righteous, and the pious; upon the leaders of Israel and the remnant of the scholars; upon true converts and upon us . . ." (13th petition of the Daily *Amidah* prayer).

"Rabbi Elazar said: 'The Holy One, Praised be He, exiled Israel among the nations for the purpose of gaining Converts . . .'" (*Pesahim* 87b).

"In modern times conversions to Judaism are not very numerous" (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1905).

Why Modern Jews are Reluctant Proselytizers

CONVERSION, OR WHAT PASSED FOR IT, WAS, IN Biblical times, an apparently informal procedure that was tied in with achieving legal equality in the Jewish community. Upon becoming a member of the family, tribe or civic unit, the stranger also adopted the religious practices of the group. The only unique feature of the Israelite format was the requirement that the new member eschew any association with his former gods and practices, though we have no way of knowing to what extent it was enforced, given the existence of sub-rosa paganism in ancient Israel.

By Hellenistic and Roman times, however, it becomes clear that the conversion of gentiles was a prominent feature of Second Temple Judaism, indeed a distinguishing one. It is obvious from numerous Talmudic statements that this practice was far from universally approved, but all legal, anecdotal and historical sources indicate its pervasive presence. The Jews of that period were, in large measure, aggressively contemptuous of the pagan religions surrounding them and eager to win over converts. By then, the forms had become fairly well established. A person was legally "reborn" through the act of conversion, in the sense that he transferred his legal location from the gentile community to the Jewish one and agreed to abide by its laws and affirmations. This step was formalized with the adoption of a new name, thus signifying the almost total severance of formal connections with the gentile world. (One of the attractions of Paul's program for gentile Christians was his abrogation of this requirement. One could become a Jew-of-sorts without formally leaving the gentile community of which one was a part.)

Jewish proselytism expressed itself not only in a desire to convert

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individuals, it even took on such extreme forms as the forced conversions of whole groups of people during the Hasmonean period (called *gerim gerurim*—"dragged converts"). This was, of course, a far cry from the ideal rabbinic model of the *ger Zedek* (sincere convert) or *ger emet* (true convert). The rabbis of Talmudic times were quite aware that converts were often motivated by less-than-ideal reasons, ranging from marriage to superstition to career advantages. A listing of them could serve a modern rabbi as a sound practical guide for identifying "conversion-prone personalities" (See *Yevamot* 24b). Rabbi Nehemiah's contention that insincere or misguided converts are not to be accepted, is specifically rejected by the Talmud, which cites Rav to the effect "the law is according to those who say they are all converts (i.e., qualified to marry Jews)". The law would take no cognizance of circumstances and motive, but attitudes toward converts did vary. The strongest anti-convert statement, that of Rabbi Helbo (*Yevamot* 47b) that converts are like *sappahat* (itching boils)¹ may be more a pun, according to George Foote Moore, than a true expression of opinion. The school of Shammai seems to have looked upon converts unenthusiastically, while the Hillelites appear to have been eager to accept them. The differences are anecdotally expressed in the famous story (*Shabbat* 31b) about Shammai's rejection of the gentile seeking "the Torah while I stand on one foot" as opposed to Hillel's acceptance of him on those terms. What is relevant to our situation is the clear-cut fact that Talmudic legal practice ignored motive and accepted the validity of the legal act.

The ability of Jews to attract converts, particularly among Christians, is attested to by early Church documents and by the Imperial Roman legislation which starts with Constantine and became permanent in the Theodosian codes of the early fifth century. The Theodosian rule was quite simple: A Jew who converted a Christian suffered loss of life and confiscation of property. Very deftly, the Christian legalists adapted their anti-Jewish program to existing legal traditions. They defined circumcision of a non-Jew as castration and applied the established sanctions. [Andrew Sharf, *Byzantine Jews*, (Schocken, 1971)].

This Roman law set the legal base for subsequent Christian legislation on the matter and probably also set the pattern for later Moslem legislation as well. From then on, in societies dominated by competing monotheistic (and monolithic) religions, the Jews would be per-

1. [It is ironic that this utterance, which is virtually unique in its extreme hostility toward converts to Judaism, is a play-on-words based on a verse in Isaiah (14:1) which looks forward favorably to the accession of proselytes to the house of Israel! The verse reads as follows: "The Lord will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and aliens (*hager*) will join them and will cleave (*venispehu*) to the house of Jacob." The verb *sapah*, "cleave," in Isaiah is associated by Rabbi Helbo with *sappahat*, "itching boil." R.G.]

manently handicapped. They would be subject to subtle and more direct pressures to convert, and forbidden to retaliate openly by harassing the deserters or by seeking converts on their own.

Nonetheless, we know that conversions to Judaism did take place, a fact which is not surprising, considering the far-from-homogeneous character of life in those times, particularly in pre-Crusade Europe. While effective imposition of the discriminatory laws did not occur until the later middle ages in Spain and central Europe, all conversionary activity had to be surreptitious. A person would leave one community, convert in a second and take up residence in a third, preferably in a foreign country. Such a procedure required that those officiating be certain of the identity and motives of the convert, since he or she represented a danger to the community. With the universal tightening up of anti-Jewish legislation during and after the Crusades the risk increased proportionately and, with it, the reluctance and the fear.

Though the Jewish experience in Moslem lands had little direct influence on the prevalent attitudes toward conversion in contemporary Israel and the United States, conversion was dangerous business. It is true that the Moslem rulers rarely instituted expulsions and pogroms, and never maintained that pattern for long when they did, but the Jewish community was always liable to sporadic and local violence. Long established custom consigned Jews to inferior status and frequent humiliation and bred a practical tradition of low-profile and humbleness. Fortunately, Moslem society tolerated other minorities, mainly Christians, so that the Jews were not quite so exposed as in the Christian lands where they were the only legitimate dissenters.

Necessity having a great effect on legal procedures and attitudes, the Jewish legal tradition concerning converts developed along the lines of officially discouraging them. More important than the letter of the law (which technically retained an open door) were the ingrained fear, suspicion and reluctance, so that the rabbinic requirement for altruistic motives provided a convenient handle for fending off the danger by hesitation and delay. Beyond the specifics of the law, there grew up an attitude toward converts and conversion which survived the specific circumstances that engendered it and assumed independent status as a norm among traditional Jews.

The Orthodox-Liberal Consensus About Conversion

The modern Orthodox rabbinate has retained and, in some measure, has reinforced, the inherited reluctance to convert. There is, of course, the inertial effect of the legal tradition and practice, reinforced by the intramural battle between the Orthodox and other religious groups, in which the former deny religious legitimacy to any but

Orthodox formulations of Jewish belief and commitment. They insist, therefore, that any conversion must be "Orthodox" in both form and content. Technically, the convert is expected to subscribe to an Orthodox Jewish life pattern, and to have no ulterior motive. In practice, of course, most conversions are either for purposes of marriage, or for the attainment of majority status in Israel. In addition, the vast portion of the Jewish community is neither Orthodox nor even definably religious.

The peculiar dynamics of a decentralized Orthodoxy tend to put a premium on caution. It is always more comfortable to be a *maḥmir* (strict constructionist) than a *maykil* (loose constructionist). In the absence of a recognized authority to sanction liberalizing moves, any leader who claims Orthodox credentials stands in danger of being accused of not being Orthodox enough and of losing his constituency to super-pietists. Moreover, in a technical sense, an Orthodox rabbi who converts a non-Jew who subsequently does *not* observe all the *mizvot* has become a cause for that person's sinning. What is permitted to the convert as a non-Jew is now a punishable offense in Torah law.

All of this combines to make involvement in conversions a potentially uncomfortable or even risky activity for the average Orthodox rabbi. Certainly one who attempted to embark on any sustained and public conversion program would come under heavy pressure from almost all segments of the Orthodox community.

The non-Orthodox majority of the community is dominated by religious and secular liberals who, from an entirely different perspective, also have strong objections to any organized attempt to seek out converts. The fact that many Reform rabbis have been parties to "convenience conversions" does not mean that liberal rabbis are eagerly seeking converts. Such conversions are basically part of the move to accommodate intermarriages and run counter to "true-blue" liberalism.

The liberal-universalist Jew looks toward a society which transcends Jewish-Christian differences and enables people to meet on the level of common humanity. Many of these people, particularly those with intellectual credentials (or pretensions), act as if this goal has been actually achieved, or could be, if only the way were shown with determination. For them the whole idea of conversion is anathema. For the more militant agnostic or for the atheist, religion itself is best dispensed with and the insistence on a conversion is regarded as a dated medievalism. The more conventional and respectably reverent liberal sees in such insistence an unacceptable assertion of a superior truth, a veiled assumption of chosen-ness. Why, after all, should we presume to insist that the non-Jew become Jewish? Why should not the Jew change? Better to take the proper liberal stance, and not even suggest conversion to either party.

A reinforcing factor in the secular realm is the subtle self-hatred which infects many rank-and-file members of congregations, particularly the women who form the "backbone" of social life in many synagogues. Those who are Jewishly literate or sophisticated may find it hard to believe that a *goy* would give up the advantages of being "out there" in order to accept the burden of Jewish identity. Since most converts are women who have married Jewish men they are also perceived as the ever-present *shiksas* who threaten their husbands' fidelity, their sons' loyalty and their daughters' chances of finding a suitable Jewish mate. This factor tends to attenuate with each generation removed from the immigrant and is virtually non-existent among the more educated and assimilated young people, but remains significant for the present.

What all of this means is that two major trends in Jewish religious life are dominated by groups which, for very diverse reasons, are reluctant to get involved in any serious effort for the organized conversion of non-Jews. In Israel, the Orthodox Establishment is well-known for its perpetuation of Galut-nurtured attitudes and its virtual imperviousness to its immediate secular environment. American Jewry is dominated by liberal clergy, professionals and laymen who regard organized missionary efforts as unethical behavior. Doctors don't advertise—neither should religions.

Do We Need Converts?

Statistics about Jewish population growth between 1775 and 1939 are still largely guesstimates, presuming that Jews in 1775 numbered some 1.75 to 2.5 million and reached from 15 to 18 million in 1939. Jewish population growth equalled, if it did not surpass, the most impressive records of that era. But while Hitler may not have made the world *judenrein*, he did succeed in putting an end to the rapid growth of the world Jewish population. Hitler killed more than six million—he killed the fertile core of the Jewish people. Alone among the major victims of World War II, the Jewish people—now at some 14.5 million—have not reached their pre-1939 population level. We may be guilty of some things, but over-populating the world is not one of them. Not only have we lost absolutely, but we have done so at a time of enormous population expansion and have, therefore, shrunk in proportion as well. In the U.S., since 1939 we have declined from almost 5% of the population to less than 3%. Our expertise in birth control is seemingly matched only by our ability to train skilled assimilators. We are very short of people. Pre-War Polish Jewry could provide immigrants to every Jewish community in the world without appreciably affecting its own base, which grew from one million to five million while "exporting" an equivalent number. Today, the state of Israel grows only by "draining" Jewish communities. Given the skyrocketing rates of inter-marriage in the Diaspora and the

ever-more tenuous character of Jewish identity which both cause and result from that phenomenon, we have to look beyond ourselves for replacements.

The lush days of philo-Semitism, spawned in large part by the world-wide recoil from Hitler's excesses, are now fading quickly. Israel—and world Jewry—are increasingly isolated and uncomfortably dependent upon the uncertain need of American support. That support would be much more certain if we were ten million rather than five or six. Israel would be much better off with five rather than two and a half million Jews. Anti-Zionism and its close companion, anti-Semitism, are now solidly established in the New Left and the Third World movement. (Would the indifference which greeted the revelation that North Vietnamese pilots and missilemen were helping the Arabs have been extended to *South* Vietnam helping Israel?) The Arabs have made potent use of the Moslem factor in turning Third World, and particularly African nations, against Israel. An aggressive and well financed proselytizing program sponsored by Egypt in Black Africa contributed to that success.

Given the Arabs' rather sordid past as slave traders, why should Africans be responsive to Moslem missionaries? Milton Himmelfarb, in an article in *Commentary* (May 1964) notes that western colonialism had an upsetting effect on life in Africa, making the old paganism untenable as a respectable religious system. At the same time, Christianity was a "white man's religion." Islam, on the other hand, as a non-European monotheism, was both respectable and comfortable. Himmelfarb notes that during this period Israel was extraordinarily active in Africa. Military and economic assistance teams abounded and thousands of Africans studied in Israel. They were exposed to every aspect of Israel life—except religion!

Is There Any Potential for Converts?

There has probably never been a time since Constantine when Judaism was more attractive to large numbers of people. The fact is that there are significant numbers of converts without our even trying to find them, and interest in Judaism or related themes is rising. The outstanding intellectual phenomenon of the past decade has been the resurgence of "tribalism" in Western and Westernized intellectual circles. The search for roots, identity and time-hallowed rituals is not abating. The astounding success in Japan of the anonymous author's *The Jews and the Japanese*—not to mention the universally favorable reception of "Fiddler on the Roof"—attests to the enormous fascination that exists for things Jewish. There are numerous parallels between early Zionism and the Black power movement in the United States.

The very aspects of Jewishness which we played down in our "liberal" anti-parochial stage—our ancient origins, our unique traditions,

our instinctive solidarity, our sense of chosen-ness and messianic expectation—are the very things which individuals, and even nations, are eagerly seeking. We have come through the Emancipation and the Industrial Revolution with our links to the past and sense of destiny intact. We are where most others hope to be. This is not to say that we have not been dramatically altered or that all Jews have retained this sense of continuity, but only that Collective Jewry has done so. Any religion or culture which could survive fifty years of concentrated Soviet Communist brainwashing and produce the young Russian Jewish activists of the 1970's must have something to say to the millions who are seeking some cultural or religious life-raft in the swirling rapids of change.

Japanese society is going through considerable intellectual and spiritual turmoil. Christianity, compromised as it is by identification with white imperialism, has made modest inroads. Arab terrorist groups have been able to recruit fanatics from the disoriented Left. Given the widespread curiosity about Jews—and the numerous points of similarity between Jewish traditions and Japanese values—is it too farfetched to assume that a serious missionary effort might not have garnered some tens of thousands of converts over the past twenty years? The Japanese may be ambivalent toward Americans as such, but they have not hesitated to adopt American systems, ideas and life styles which have suited them. A dozen Japanese rabbis trained in American seminaries and sent home with relatively modest financial backing might have created a Japanese Jewish community of some stature. Such a community would be very nice to have at this point when Japan is so subject to Arab oil pressure.

The traveler in Israel is taken aback to see the roads filled with hitchhiking young people, many of them non-Jewish. Attracted to Israel, they still feel like outsiders. How many of them would be responsive to an open door and some indication of our interest in their joining the family?

Many young Israeli Arabs work at “passing” as Jews, a natural desire on the part of minority young people to be part of the majority culture. Every society, even the most benevolent, that has hosted Jews, has through one or more of its cultural or religious institutions encouraged the desire to assimilate to the majority. Would it be wrong for Israel similarly to encourage its minorities (some of whom may even be the descendants of the original Jewish inhabitants of the land)?

Are there not thousands of young Germans, deeply ashamed of what their fathers did to the Jewish people, who might find in conversion a powerful form of atonement and disassociation? Would that not be the ultimate triumph over Hitler—the co-opting of Germans in the task of Jewish survival?

I have no doubt that there are tens, even hundreds of thousands, of people throughout the world who would be delighted to become Jew-

ish if only somebody would ask them. Yet, when they turn to us they sense indifference or even a subtle hostility, and all but the most determined are effectively turned off.

What Can We Do?

The preceding evaluation is based upon three assumptions:

1. Many people would want to become Jews.
2. A non-Jew has a *right* to join us if he sincerely desires to identify and participate, and we have no right to refuse or to try to prevent such affiliation.
3. Conversion of gentiles would be good for the Jews.

The great stumbling block at the moment is that the forms of conversion and the ostensible reasons for accepting converts have their origins in earlier periods and do not reflect the realities of modern Jewish existence. Orthodox conversion is suited to bringing people into an Orthodox community. But the modern Jewish community is no longer universally observant or even religious. One does not have to be religious or observant in order to be a Jew in good standing, so how can we make such commitments a qualification for conversion? Reform conversions are tailored to the theory that Jews are distinguished from others only in matters of religious profession and ritual. Modern Jewish identity is much more a matter of ethnic identity and communal association, which is not reflected in the universalist-oriented forms which veer sharply away from demands for parochial loyalty and assertions of uniqueness and chosen-ness. The Conservatives have not as yet evolved a unique pattern. Individual rabbis reflect varying degrees of Orthodox or Reform patterns.

In considering methods for programmed conversions it is important to distinguish universality of form from the particularity of motivation. Here the Talmudic practice is instructive. While exalting ideal models of conversion (the *ger zedek*) the Rabbis ruled, nevertheless, that all converts were eligible to marry Jews as long as their conversions were properly effected. Thus, in the Jewish tradition, we should simultaneously strive for the universal reinstitution of the traditional conversion format while at the same time broadening the motivational options deemed acceptable.

The reality of modern Jewish identity offers four major "affirmation systems" which ought to be regarded as proper reasons for desiring conversion:

1. The traditional religious affirmation, as expressed in various Orthodox ideologies.
2. The liberal religious affirmation, which runs the gamut from the Orthopraxy of Conservatism to the antinomian extremes of Reform.
3. The ethnic affirmation, which, while religiously neutral, expresses itself in admiration of the Jewish community and in a desire to participate in its life and destiny.

4. The Zionist-Aliyah affirmation, which takes the form of a willingness to take up permanent residence in Israel and to be identified with its Jewish component.

Born-Jews use one or more of these systems to express their commitment to Jewish identity and survival and they all implicitly exclude any formulation of Jewish destiny which asserts that the Jewish people have been superseded, or have no legitimate right to a continued separate existence. Any convert must accept either the inevitability or the desirability of continued Jewish collective life and must be committed to work for Jewish continuity in one or more of the ways accepted by the majority of Jews.

A worldwide program for conversion should start by introducing into Jewish schools, synagogues, and publications material informing our people about the ancient respectability of conversionary efforts, explaining the desirability of attracting converts, and urging greater interest in, and appreciation of, converts. Instead of initiating converts almost surreptitiously in empty sanctuaries, rabbis ought to grant converts public recognition as we honor new affiliates of our organizations or new contributors to our charities. We should directly condemn Jews who treat converts with suspicion or rejection. Finally, we should set up institutional machinery such as schools, reading rooms and tribunals which could institutionalize the educational, ritual and absorption procedures. In other words, we should make conversion accessible, convenient and honorable.

Some may say that such procedures would bring in some people who will not "cut the mustard" and will drop out or remain inactive or marginal. This is a specious argument. Our present methods are far from universally successful. The fact that not all entering freshmen are graduated from college, or that not all rabbinical school graduates take pulpits or undertake cognate professions is never used as an argument for abolishing the educational enterprises. UJA campaign workers do not score with every prospect, but they certainly keep trying. Every convert represents a potential member for our shrinking synagogue rolls, a potential parent of children to send to our dwindling schools, a potential *oleh* for Israel. A convert as Jew-on-the-way-in cancels out the negative effect of the all too familiar Jew-on-the-way-out. Above all, given our sublimated but still potent tendency to accept gentile evaluations of ourselves, the phenomenon of so many gentiles eagerly "wanting in" might stimulate large numbers of indifferent Jews to take another, and more positive, look at their Jewishness.

Our theology does not require, nor does our sociology expect that the whole world become Jewish. But, surely it would not disrupt God's purposes or undermine human brotherhood if we became a mere 1% of humanity and numbered twenty-five or thirty millions.

Charles Hartshorne and the Defenders of Heschel

HAROLD M. SCHULWEIS

IN HIS EVALUATION OF "HESCHEL AND HIS Critics,"¹ Professor Tanenzapf proposes the adoption of Charles Hartshorne's process metaphysics in order to secure philosophic support for Heschel's Biblical world-view and to counter his critics. The latter fault Heschel for his failure to sustain his insights with theological argumentation and for his unphilosophic predilection for dealing with God in unabashedly anthropomorphic terms.

A number of contemporary theologians, both Christian and Jewish, have similarly argued that even where philosophic articulation of the theology implicit in the Bible is used, it is hampered by a false dependence upon the classical categories of Aristotelian metaphysics. Rather than a wholesale repudiation of philosophy, they, like Prof. Tanenzapf, suggest that Biblical theologians ought to adopt the metaphysical approach of Hartshorne whose categories are held to be more compatible with the living God of the Bible. While the ideas of divine perfection of classical metaphysics ascribe immutability and impassibility to God, they maintain that Hartshorne's di-polar process categories make room for God's growth, openness to the future and responsiveness to the suffering of His creatures. Acceptance and application of this newer approach would, it is contended, lend metaphysical substantiation to Heschel's leading notion of "divine pathos," and overcome the charge that Heschel's treatment of the living God slips back into the dangers of anthropomorphism.

However, I would argue that the proposed relationship of Biblical and process categories can be only surface accomodation. The moral connotation of goodness in Heschel's Biblical view and in Hartshorne's process view is radically different. Hartshorne transmutes the Biblical understanding of moral values into metaphysical values. His metaphysical understanding of God's goodness, love, suffering and concern is incompatible with Heschel's Biblical appreciation of those devine predicates. The use of Hartshorne's categories may be serviceable in presenting the logic of a God who grows in knowledge and in relationship, and yet retains His unsurpassable wisdom and absoluteness, but

1. JUDAISM, Summer, 1964.

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it fails the crucial moral test of the Bible. The divine pathos whose attentiveness "reveals the extreme pertinence of man to God" and entails an involvement in history and a special concern with humanity: this is not reflected in the metaphysical orientation.²

What is it that Hartshorne means by God's love and concern?

It is certainly true that Charles Hartshorne is particularly sensitive to both the Biblical and philosophical strands in historical theology. He recognizes that the classical categories of philosophy express a bias against change, plurality and potentiality; and that they favor an immutable, self-sufficient deity inconsistent with the Biblical, personalistic insights into God's character. According to Hartshorne, the theological failure to express a metaphysics reflecting the Biblical view is due to traditional theism's reliance upon a one-sided, static metaphysics. He offers his own di-polar process philosophy as metaphysically supportive of the Biblical God who is "an all-loving, efficacious friend."³ In his panentheism, the attributes of being and becoming are harmonized so as to present one perfect Being in whom two complementary qualities reside.

But to go to the heart of the matter, in what sense is Hartshorne's God a loving God? How does Hartshorne's God exhibit His efficacy and friendship? Whose friend is He and will He take sides to protect the innocent tormented by evil? And what moral significance, if any, is implied by Hartshorne's conception of divine perfection?

For Hartshorne, the controlling image of Perfection is that of an Inclusive Process in which ideals are progressively realized and remembered. Hartshorne's panentheism conceives of God as an Eternal-Temporal Consciousness, knowing and including the World. The mark of ultimate goodness is in the adequate taking into account of all possible and actual interests, each being given its due. "Maximal social inclusiveness" is the criterion of the goodness of the Supreme Being-Becoming. Evil is exclusion, the ignorance and ignoring of the interests of all things. God is aware of all, including all forms of evil, because He cares for all. The plenitude principle of the *Timaieus* is echoed in Hartshorne's process theodicy. Inasmuch as God's goodness is expressed in His total concern for all, only a provincial anthropocentrism would have God declare His partisanship. God literally loves all and "appreciates the qualities of all things—period."⁴ Therefore, He cannot wish the sick child well without caring about the woes of the bacteria. It is not that God views the whole of things impassively. Unlike the stolid impassibility of the scholastic Deity, Hartshorne's

2. A. J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), p. 483.

3. Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God* (Chicago: Willet, Clark & Co., 1941), p. 93.

4. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1962), p. 142.

sensitive God grieves in all griefs. There is no callousness in not destroying the bacteria to save the child. "He merely has other values to consider also."⁵

The omni-benevolence of the divine Perfection governs His providential wisdom. God balances, limits and distributes powers with an eye towards maximal fecundity.⁶ On the one hand, too much freedom would increase discord; on the other, concord gained by excessive external control would lead to a "loss of vitality, of depth of individuality, and of zest arising from creative capacities."⁷ Ever open to growth and improvement, the Process-Perfection governs the best of possible worlds. God's general providence does not interfere with creation but holds a gentle rein, setting "wholesome limits to our eccentricities (and) guiding the world as a whole in a desirable direction . . ."⁸

Hartshorne's assumption of the providential benevolence of God who respects the independence of His friends begs the Jobian question. How are "love" and "righteousness" exhibited through Hartshorne's "hands-off" theodicy? If the function of divine providence is "to set limits to the free interplay of lesser individuals, which otherwise would be chaos," why were limitations not set upon the ruthless men of the Holocaust?⁹ How can one affirm God's setting limits on human eccentricity in the face of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Vietnam, Biafra and Bangladesh? Is divine non-intervention in such holocaustal outrages morally justifiable on the grounds that God cares more about providing zest, vitality and creativity in the universe? Surely "love" and "righteousness" are being used in a highly un-Biblical manner by Hartshorne. It is clearly not the love which moves God to intervene in history in response to the groanings of the persecuted. Hartshorne's divine love is an all-encompassing appreciation of being, an awareness of and participation in, the suffering of the victims. However, awareness and compassion are necessary but not sufficient conditions of goodness. To know and to feel is not yet to act. Hartshorne's commitment to the metaphysical ideal of cognition has led him to substitute divine knowledge, memory and aesthetic appreciation for the moral activity which describes the Biblical God.

Hartshorne places much stock in the redemptiveness of God's "cosmic memory" which preserves all values.¹⁰ Again we must point out that such divine retentiveness is a metaphysical virtue but is far from

5. *Man's Vision of God*, p. 105.

6. Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 110.

7. *The Logic of Perfection*, p. 314.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

10. *Man's Vision of God*, p. 157.

a salvational force vindicating moral behavior. Salvation by retentive inclusion of values is removed from the Biblical faith in the transformation of the evil in the world. God's impartial participation in the positive elements of creaturely decision is properly a metaphysical, not a moral virtue. Masterful as is Hartshorne's attempt to translate Biblical insights into compatible philosophic categories, something essential in the Biblical ideal of God is lost in the process. God's metaphysical participation in being does not reflect His moral involvement. The moral partisanship of the Biblical God is not to be found in God's "universal interest in interests." To question the priority of human over simian or amoebic values, as Hartshorne does, is a far cry from the affirmations of man's centrality which inform the ethic of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.¹¹ God's metaphysical love which reveals interest in all is remote from religious moral love which upholds the fallen. It is metaphysical criteria which Hartshorne calls upon to make an independent check of our ethical insights concerning the goodness of God.¹² The moral sense of God's goodness is thus made to bend to the philosopher's metaphysical criteria.

Whatever its virtues, such submission is alien to the Biblical tradition of the moral Lord of History. Hartshorne's metaphysical love allows him to dismiss the Jobian condition with the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*: "Are we to suppose that our feeble love can tell us how infinite love must or might express itself, save in the vaguest and most general way?"¹³ Only a metaphysical love can justify the death of animals as providing them relief from boredom, can rationalize swift death on the grounds that it is preferable to slow degeneration, and can celebrate the excitement and adventure of freedom as compensation for the frightful collision of conflicting evils.

Hartshorne's conception of divine perfection and his theodicy are largely dependent upon Whitehead's aesthetic metaphysics. For Whitehead "the real world is good when it is beautiful."¹⁴ Perfection is an ideal of maximum beauty, the harmonious inclusiveness of maximum massiveness and maximum intensity. Whitehead's ideal of perfection is a footnote to Plato's principle of plenitude and the lever upon which his theodicy is raised. Storms and barbaric invasions, in themselves admittedly destructive, must be appreciated as contributory values to the adventure of ever new and increased perfections. The vision of the whole-in-process wipes out the terror of past and part. Without conflict, Whitehead reiterates, history would stagnate with the tedium of infinite repetition and degenerate through the stultifying tameness

11. *The Logic of Perfection*, p. 309.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

13. *Philosophers Speak of God*, p. 110.

14. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: MacMillan, 1933), p. 345.

of life. Whitehead's metaphysical aesthetic identifies goodness with beauty. Morality is an instrumental value, an overstressed aspect of goodness; but Beauty is the only self-justifying value. The teleology of the universe aims at the harmony which produces Beauty. "Thus any system of things which in any wide sense is beautiful is to that extent justified in its existence."¹⁵ To question the morality of Beauty may be regarded as irreverence, but when the harmony of Beauty is used to justify the sufferings of men, it is the most pertinent of all inquiries for those attached to the Biblical view.

For Hartshorne, like Tillich, "love" is treated as an ontological concept characterized by inclusive unity and participation. It is a love for each and every other, apart from considerations of higher or lower, pleasant or unpleasant qualities. Divine justice and love function impersonally as an order of being. The metaphysical God, however its categories are formulated, takes no side. It stands apart from the humanistic bias of the Biblical God who responds to "the needy one who groans, the afflicted one who has no helper. He pities the poor and needy, the soul of the needy He delivers, redeems their souls from oppression and injustice; precious is their blood in His sight."¹⁶ The philosopher's idea of providence extends itself equally to non-rational and rational beings, to the bacteria as well as to man.

Heschel's perception of the Bible and of prophecy makes moral demands upon God and His providential care which neither supranatural nor naturalistic metaphysics is able to satisfy. However uniquely transcendent the Biblical God, His significant other is man, and the exhibition of His goodness is discovered in its benevolent effects upon man.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 341.

16. Psalm 72:12f.

From “*Leshon Hakodesh*” to “*Shok Totali*”

THEODORE FRIEDMAN

THE MYSTERY OF THE TITLE OF THIS REFLECTION —if mystery it be—is readily unravelled. *Shok totali* is a fair specimen of the kind of Hebrew one hears these days with increasing frequency on the street, over the radio and on television, the latter to exclude announcers and newscasters.¹ Total shock precisely describes the impact of Israel’s spoken Hebrew on anyone who, like this writer, came to Israel with the Hebrew language soaked into his bones through years of immersion in its classical and modern sources. While this particular tid-bit is culled from a fairly recent television program, it is only a small sample. The list of faintly Hebraized words and phrases lifted out of English with reckless abandon grows day by day. *Fantasti, normali, liberali, irrazionali, aggressivi, dominanti, disproporzia, intellettuali, costruttivi, distruttivi*, and thousands of others. These and their like have been accepted by our contemporary Hebrew lexicographers and are to be found in their dictionaries.

How far the process has gone, and continues to gallop headlong, is to be seen by a random comparison between Ben Yehuda’s sixteen volume Thesaurus of the Hebrew Language, completed in 1959, and the two editions of Even Shoshan’s Hebrew Dictionary. One looks in vain for the “Hebrew” words cited above in Ben Yehuda’s magnum opus. All of them, on the other hand, are to be found in Even Shoshan’s work. Even more revealing are the differences in this regard between the first edition of Even Shoshan’s dictionary, the first volume of which appeared in 1948, and the enlarged, completely revised edition, the first volume of which was published in 1966. A cursory scanning of a few pages of the two versions reveals that *ofiziali, ocultism, evacuazia, urbanizm, organ, orthodox* do not appear in the earlier version of his dictionary; they do appear in the 1966 edition. One can safely assume that these examples, taken from a half dozen or so pages listing “Hebrew” words beginning with the letter *alef*, are typical of the dictionary as a whole.

Our quarrel, however, is not with the Israeli lexicographers. Legiti-

1. As an explanation of this exclusion, the writer has it from reliable sources that the copy of all regular news casts is pre-edited by an expert Hebrew linguist, with an eye to eliminating barbarisms and, generally, to insure good Hebrew. The man in question is the author of an excellent comparative study of Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew.

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mately, they include in their dictionaries current usages to be found or heard among those who speak Hebrew. They merely record, duly noting by an asterisk or circle that the word is of foreign origin. But before we quarrel with anyone, the phenomenon itself deserves some analysis. For language is more than language, more than a means of communication. It is an accurate mirror of a people's life, past and present, its attitudes, values, psychology and the cultural influences that impinge upon it. What does not exist in a particular language does not exist for the people who speak it. Thus, for example, there are no authentic blasphemous expletives in Hebrew, nothing even remotely parallel to such phrases as "God damn", or "For Christ's sake". The third Commandment, as well as the deep-rooted traditional Jewish reticence in using the name of God, effectively barred the use of divine names as expletives. On the other hand, what does exist in a language, exists in life and can, therefore, serve as a telltale indicator of that life. If the Greeks "had a word for it," then, obviously, they had "it," whatever "it" might have been.

Obviously, there are no "pure" languages any more than there are pure races. Every language, unless it be that of some remote, primitive, isolated tribe, borrows from the languages of the cultures with which it comes in contact. It is not otherwise with Hebrew. To go no further back than the Mishnah (edited about 200 C.E.) we find that it contains approximately 300 foreign loan words, borrowed from the Greek, Latin and Persian. What kind of words did the Rabbis of the Mishnah find it necessary to borrow? With very few exceptions, they were words for which no equivalent existed in either Hebrew or Aramaic, the two languages current in Palestine at the time. Such words did not exist simply because the objects, ideas or practices they expressed had been theretofore unknown. A few examples will illumine the point.

Mukhne (contrivance or machine), *ambate* (large-sized bathtub), *sefog* (sponge). All these derive from the Greek and Latin and are to be found in the Mishnah. These, and their like, were readily adopted and naturalized into Hebrew because they represented items introduced into Palestine by the Greeks or Romans. The same principle operates today in every language. When something is introduced from abroad, it generally brings its foreign name with it. The word coffee is of Turkish origin and, hence, it is "coffee" or a reasonable facsimile thereof in every language. The same holds true of the words pyjamas (Japanese) and tobacco (American Indian). The practice is natural and unexceptionable. But any parallel between the past and the present inundation of Hebrew by English is totally misleading. Even the most fastidious Hebrew purist could not possibly raise any serious objection to the naturalization in Hebrew of such words as telephone, radio or television.

But what of such grotesqueries as *irrelevanti*, *selekziya*, *integriziya*.

(Incidentally, the noun-ending *aziya*, equivalent to the English noun-ending "ion," is Polish! Hebrew, that is, authentic Hebrew, does not possess a single noun that ends in *azia*.) Among the worst group of offenders appear to be the copywriters of the advertising agencies. A well-known American cigarette, for example, is advertised through placards plastered around the country proclaiming that "*Lefilter u'l'aroma eyn kamohu.*" (For filter and aroma there is nothing like it.) The sentence contains four words, two English and two Hebrew. Increasingly, new food products are introduced on the market bearing English names, transliterated into Hebrew. Thus, frozen vegetables are packaged under the label "Sun-kissed." (Here, as elsewhere, names have been slightly disguised in order not to provide free publicity.) Quite typical of the current trend are the following examples culled at random from scores.

A new hotel opens in Eilat; its name that of a posh resort on the French Riviera, which begins with Saint. For a decade, a Jerusalem hotel carried a name reflecting its historic locale. Recently extensively enlarged, refurbished and moved up to five star status, it was re-dubbed by its P.R. man and became "The Ambassador." As far as its name is concerned, it might as well be located in New York, London or Singapore instead of fronting on the magnificent hills of Judea.

What is true of the names of hotels is no less true of the names of new business enterprises. One has but to walk through the shopping center of Jerusalem and note the names of the newer stores and cafes. "His and Hers" (a boutique), "The Pharmacy" (a cafe).

The phenomenon is revealing, distressingly so, for anyone for whom the rebirth of Hebrew is not the least of the miracles of the Jewish national renaissance. Moreover, in the light of the actual and potential resources of the Hebrew language, as revealed, for example, in the writings of the late poet and translator Avraham Shlonsky, this reckless substitution of English for Hebrew is a manifestation to be pondered. Its implications for cultural assimilation or, perhaps, more precisely, cultural *mishmash*, are to be taken seriously. Why faintly Hebraized English when, for example, for every so-called "Hebrew" word cited above, there exists a perfectly adequate authentic Hebrew equivalent and, in some instances, even a striking Hebrew idiom?

Serious though it be, the least of the problems presented to an authentic Hebrew by a growing influx of English words is that of vocabulary. Obviously, language is much more than vocabulary. Every language is marked by a distinctive structure, its own peculiar word order, peculiarities of idiom and rhythm. In brief, every language has its own spirit, one that reflects that of the people who speak it. Decades ago, Bialik pointed out that the closest authentic Hebrew parallel to the common proverb, "The ends justify the means" is actually a contradiction of that old saw. The Hebrew says, "*Mizvah habaah b'averah,*" a *mizvah*

performed by means of an *averah* (sin) which, as anyone at all familiar with Talmud knows, is no *mizvah* at all. Jewish ethics discountenances the view that the ends justify the means and expresses its disapproval in its own way.

From an example taken from the lofty realm of ethics, one turns to the common speech of everyday affairs for evidence of English transforming Hebrew into its own image. Colloquial as well as written Hebrew consciously or unconsciously apes English when it says *reva lishtayim* (a quarter of two). The authentic Hebrew form would be *shtayim pahot reva* (two minus a quarter). Incidentally, that is how the French and Spanish say it. In good Hebrew one does not say, *Anee zarikh lalekhet* (I have to go) but, rather, *Alai lalekhet* (literally, Upon me to go). Yet, the latter form has all but disappeared from common usage, to judge by what one hears on the streets of Jerusalem.

No prophetic vision is required to foresee the end result to which this process, left uncurbed, must eventually lead—a bastardized Hebrew that would have as much relationship to the classical sources of Hebrew as, say, contemporary English bears to old Anglo-Saxon. The loss in cultural continuity would be incalculable. To Israeli students, nurtured on such Hebrew, the study of the Bible, as well as other Jewish classics, would entail learning what would be virtually a foreign language. The language of the Bible a foreign tongue to the People of the Book! The miracle of the rebirth of Hebrew would prove to have been in vain. Indeed, the miracle was possible in the first instance only because innumerable Jews, at least, in Ben Yehuda's day, had been suckled on the Hebrew of the Bible, Mishnah and Midrash. Without that rich passive knowledge of the language, widely diffused, the revival of Hebrew as a spoken tongue would have been inconceivable. The event may yet ironically prove that what Ben Yehuda succeeded in giving a new birth to was eventually transformed into a language whose resemblance to its original sources is purely coincidental.

If such danger is real and present, what are the forces, apparent and hidden, that are propelling the process described above? The ascription of the process to the recent spurt in aliyah from the United States is demonstrably false. Despite the precipitous decline in American aliyah in the past two years—at its peak, in 1970, a scant ten thousand—the submerging of Hebrew word patterns by English shows no such signs of abatement. Recent Russian aliyah, three times the annual rate of American aliyah at its height, has had no perceptible influence on the current Hebrew of Israelis. The source lies elsewhere, much closer to home.

Actually, it is a combination of two factors. The first is a growing ignorance of the classical sources of the language. And by classical sources we intend the whole range of Hebrew literature from the Bible to Bialik

to Agnon. Anyone who draws his oral Hebrew from these sources is mockingly referred to as speaking *Ivrit shel shabbat* (Sabbath Hebrew). The ignorance, apparently, is not confined to the proverbial man in the street. It is revealed in the speeches and writings of members of Knesset journalists and, God save the mark, even in the work of some contemporary Hebrew writers and translators. In one recent newspaper article by the leader of an important political party, this writer came across such words as "opportunism," "truism," "tactics," "aspects," etc. And all this from a political leader whose foreign policy for Israel appeals essentially to history and sentiment! A growing and ever more widespread knowledge of English—Israeli students begin its study in the fifth grade—renders it easier to employ a readily available English word or phrase than to cudgel one's brain or to consult a dictionary in search of the appropriate Hebrew word. Time was, when a Moshe Sharett, late Foreign Minister and a master of the Hebrew language, would correct Cabinet Ministers and M.K.'s on their faulty Hebrew. That day seems to have passed. Sharett appears to have been the last surviving member of the League for the Defense of the Hebrew Language, a flourishing, active organization during the twenties and early thirties. Ignorance, it must be admitted, is not readily remediable. Nor does one detect any serious efforts in that direction. Certainly not when, for example, the Hebrew University, in the past few years, has been offering a growing number of courses whose language of instruction is English, but which are open to Israelis, and employs instructors whose Hebrew leaves much to be desired.

Allied to ignorance, but no less a potent force in the Anglicizing of Hebrew, is what can only be described as a certain kind of snobbism. To speak English or to sprinkle one's Hebrew liberally with English is to demonstrate oneself to be *haut monde*, a man of the world. But since when is speaking one's native tongue badly a sign of anything except an ill-concealed sense of inferiority? How anyone can feel a sense of inferiority about his mother tongue when it is that of Isaiah and the Psalmist is a subject to tease a psychologist. One's distinct impression in this regard is that it is precisely Israel's educated class that plays ducks and drakes with the Hebrew language. Here, as elsewhere, this is the class that is tempted to play the snob.

Our allusion to the now defunct League for the Defense of the Hebrew Language suggests that perhaps the time has come to revive it. If it should be reborn, its purpose would not be, as it once was, to ensure that Hebrew is spoken in public places. Zealous members of the League used to shout down speakers who used any language but Hebrew in their speeches or lectures. That battle has been won. A new and more difficult task awaits a revived League: to man the dikes against the flood of English now threatening to corrupt Hebrew beyond recognition. The

Israeli government currently employs a person whose task it is to pass on and correct, if necessary, the English style of official publications issued in that language. The time has come for a Hebrew stylist to perform a similar service on Hebrew publications and speeches coming from official sources. Newspapers, radio and television might follow suit. Presently, errors and barbarisms in Hebrew serve as the grist for the mill of a couple of weekly newspaper columns conducted by Hebrew language experts. While they busy themselves with what are, for the most part, niceties and subtleties of the language, the hard-won achievements of two generations of writers and scholars in reviving Hebrew as a modern language crumble before the rising tides of English in transparent Hebrew dress.

The Midrash would have it that one of the reasons for Israel's redemption from Egyptian bondage was that even in servitude the Israelites refused to abandon their native tongue. It would be a supreme irony of history if, in their age of homecoming and independence, they would permit what was once guarded so zealously to lose its distinctive character. Coming to Palestine from Babylonia in the fifth century B.C.E., Nehemiah was dismayed to find that the children of some Jews "spoke half in the speech of Ashdod and could not speak in the Jews' language." A latter-day Nehemiah would find something not too dissimilar. In a more optimistic vein, if historical parallels are to be cited, the phenomenon proved to be a passing one. Hebrew went on, in the Mishnaic period, to burgeon into new vigor and growth. In the meantime, however, our Nehemiah *redivivus* would be no less distressed than was his ancient forbear. To register such distress, this essay was written.

Martin Buber's Philosophy of Judaism

ALEXANDER S. KOHANSKI

MARTIN BUBER'S WRITING ON THE JEW AND HIS

Jewishness may not, strictly speaking, be characterized as philosophy or theology in the accepted sense of systematic or metaphysical reasoning. Rather, it is, as he puts it, a translation of his "decisive experiences into human thought-values," comprehended in a coherent thought-complex (*Denkzusammenhang*), and transmitted within a philosophical frame of reference. What is "decisive" about this thought-complex is that as it developed it also formed the basis of his philosophical world-view as a whole. That is, his general philosophy grew out of his contemplations on Judaism in successive stages, the general, as a rule, following the Jewish works. We may thus distinguish three phases in Buber's philosophy of Judaism which run parallel to his general philosophy, as follows: (1) As *substance* in the act of realization, (2) as *relation* in the encounter with the Absolute, and (3) as *essence* of the messianic goal. The first phase is developed in a series of "Speeches on Judaism" from 1909 to 1911, and given a philosophical ground in a theory of realization in his book *Daniel* (1913), and in another set of "Speeches on Judaism" (1912-1914), in which he expounded his philosophy of religion, religiosity, and mythos. The second phase is developed in two other "Speeches on Judaism"—"The Holy Way" and "Herut: On Youth and Religion" (1918-1919)—and in his early writings on Hasidism, which crystallized in the dialogic principle of relation, in his essay *I and Thou* (1923). The third phase continues along the lines of this principle as expanded in his studies of the Bible and in later "Speeches on Judaism" (1939-1951),¹ which were given religious philosophical expression chiefly in his books, *Kingship of God*, *Eclipse of God*, and *Two Types of Faith*. This does not mean to imply that the three phases rest on mutually exclusive grounds. Quite the contrary, all of these grounds are manifest in each phase, only in different stages of development, the last one representing their fullest formulation. In this essay I shall deal only with the first phase, Judaism as substance in the act of realization.

1. There are altogether twelve "Speeches on Judaism" which were delivered by Buber on different occasions and published under various titles. The first three were published as *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1916). The next three were issued together with the first and with "Der heilige Weg" and "Cheruth" in a collection, *Reden über das Judentum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1923). The last four were first published as *An der Wende: Reden über das Judentum* (Köln, 1952).

The Jews in Western and Eastern Europe

In his first three speeches on Judaism, Buber addresses himself to the individual Jew in Western Europe, rather than to the Jewish people as a whole. He points out that Jewish civic emancipation and the general enlightenment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which released the creative forces of the individual also broke up the old Jewish body-politic and thrust its members out into the outer world that had just been opened to them. This development came so suddenly that the Jew could not absorb the outer culture and make it part of his inner communal way of life, as had been the case in Eastern Europe. There, on the one hand, enlightenment in the form of Haskalah penetrated gradually and slowly, without breaking up the inner structure, and, on the other hand, an inner liberation in the form of Hasidism further cemented Jewish communal living. The result was that this outer liberation overwhelmed the Western Jew, cracked the walls of his communal structure and put great obstacles in the way of his renewal of himself as a Jew. He could awaken to his Jewishness only if he became conscious of those obstacles and sought a way of removing them. One power of such awakening, operating on the communal level, was Zionism, and the other, on the individual level, was self-cognition of the meaning of his Jewishness. Buber, himself, after he had wandered off into the emancipated world of German culture, was brought back to his own fold by embracing the Zionist cause. He then tried to blend the two powers, the communal and the individual, or the Eastern and the Western, into one force for the renewal of Judaism in his own time. "When West and East interpenetrate," he wrote, "there arises a new productivity—a specifically Jewish productivity—which forms an image of the Jewish mode, a Jewish outlook, and Jewish values."²

To bring the individual Jew to a self-awareness of his Jewishness, Buber offered him what he considered to be the *substance* of Judaism and the meaning of its *realization*. The basic idea of this approach is that every Jew carries within him the substance of Jewishness which lies dormant in his very blood and awaits the conscious act of realization. In this phase of Buber's philosophy of Judaism, the aim is to bring Judaism into the innermost of each individual Jew rather than to lead him outside of his self to the Jewish fold. For the individual has no image of a people with whom he can identify himself, unless it is presented to him as something indwelling in his own personal being, and that is the substance of his Jewishness. By becoming conscious of this substance the individuals will weld themselves together into a renewed

2. Martin Buber, *Der Jude und sein Judentum* (Köln, 1963), p. 279. The page numbers in parentheses in my article all refer to this book. All quotations are in my own translation.

people through which they will strive for their self-realization and for that of humanity as well. The emphasis here, it must be noted, is on the redemption of the individual, not the people as an entity in itself. An appeal is thus made to the Western Jew who had sought to identify himself with humanity in general, to see his Jewishness essentially the same as his human self, differing only in degree of intensity; to recognize that he cannot realize his own humanity except through the realization of his Jewishness. This is the theme of Buber's first three addresses, namely "Judaism and the Jew," "Judaism and Mankind," and "The Renewal of Judaism," which we shall now consider in broad outline.

The Jewish Question

Not finding any fulfillment of Jewishness as autonomous reality, either as a religion or as a nation in contemporary Western Jewish life, except as a recollection and perhaps a hope, Buber poses the Jewish question in the following manner: "What is it, then, that makes a man's people an autonomous reality in his soul and in his life? What makes him feel the people not just about him but in him?" (p. 11). The feeling of belonging to a people, Buber explains, has its origin in man's constant experiences of homeland, language, and custom, which he has in common with others outside of his family and close circle of friends. While this contingent level of belonging may satisfy many persons, there are also those who strive for permanence, that is, not just for constant forms of experience but for constant existence which is the bearer of all experience. In this kind of striving, the individual "I" discovers in his relationship with his community his own spiritual permanence, "an enduring substance," extending beyond his own life-span—an immortal life. The individual feels this most strongly when he discovers the succession of past generations, of parents, grandparents, ancestors, whose confluence of blood has brought his own life into existence. In this immortality of generations, the individual feels a communality of blood as his I's duration in an endless past, and he thus discovers that the blood is the core of his I and determines his thoughts and his will. His world now assumes a twofold character, each on a different level, one of his *surroundings* which are the world of his impressions and influences, and another of his *blood* which is the world of his substance receiving those impressions and influences.

Man's self-identification on the second level, that is, as substance, is no longer with those with whom he shares the external elements of homeland, language, and custom, but with the community of those with whom he shares the inner experiences of a common substance. His people now represents not his outside world, but his inner soul—a community of all those who were, are, and will be, all forming one unity. This

subjective side of belonging to one's people becomes objectified when the inner substance of blood relation and the outer surroundings of homeland, language, and custom are combined into one living reality. However, such conditions do not prevail in the relations of the Western Jew to his own folk, because he lives predominantly in the outer world of another folk, while his inner world is only a faint memory of ancestral descent. If his inner world of substance is to become a reality, he must relate himself to it not only as a past but also in the fulness of its present existence and in its hope for the future.

We need not now debate Buber's view on the ultimate source of folk-belonging in its inner and outer aspects, a view which he, himself, later changed or modified. What concerns us here is his approach to an existing situation in Jewish life, notably in the West, which was overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, determined from the outside.

Here Buber does not propose a territorial solution to the Jewish question. Rather, he recommends that the Jew in the diaspora must live in two worlds, but he wants him to be his own master in this twofold existence.

We want and ought to be aware of the fact that we are a mixture of cultures in a more pregnant sense than any other people. However, we don't want to be slaves of this mixture but its masters. The choice means a decision about supremacy, about what ought to be dominating and what dominated in us. This is what I would call the personal Jewish question, the root of all Jewish questions, the questions that we must find in ourselves, clear up in ourselves, and decide within ourselves (p. 16).

How does Buber, in this early phase of his thoughts on Judaism, answer this question? How does he propose to awaken the individual to a consciousness of his Jewishness and to induce him to act toward its renewal?

The Duality of the Jewish Soul

When the Jew looks into his own soul, Buber says, he finds in it a prime duality of extremes, of the highest and lowest human traits and aspirations, which contend against each other and drive him from pole to pole, "from crossroad to crossroad." This is of the substance of his Jewishness. Now, when he looks into the soul of man, in general, he finds the same polarity of contradictions, the same wandering restlessness of an inner duality, seeking its resolution in an inner unity. However, since the Jew throughout his history as a people has experienced this dualization more strongly than any other people, he has also produced the greatest spiritual forces of striving toward unity, a striving which has spurred his creative powers to produce the idea of God's unity, universal justice, and universal love—the idea of redemption. While the duality in the soul of the Jew is of the substance of his Jewishness, it is basically of the same nature as the duality in man, in general. The Jew-

ish question as a problem of redeeming the Jew from within, therefore, becomes a general human question of redeeming mankind as a whole.

Now, what does Buber advise the individual Jew in this regard? He tells him that his self-realization means the unification of his inner duality which can be attained through his identification with his own people, whose problem is, in substance, his own personal problem. But, if this concerns the Jew and his own people specifically, why, we may ask, must it seek its solution by extending itself into a problem of mankind as a whole? As noted, Buber addresses himself to the Western cosmopolitan Jew who does not see in his people a vehicle for his personal salvation, as he does not see any reason for his people's existence as such. As for his personal redemption, he would rather identify himself with the goal of humanity in general. Buber, therefore, wants to show this cosmopolitan Jew that he would be working toward the same universal goal by identifying himself with the Jewish people, because this people, more than any other, is best suited to lead him toward it. Judaism, says Buber, cannot give mankind new things or new content, because it is not strong enough for that. It can give only new *unity* for humanity's content, new possibility for synthesis, perhaps one embracing all past syntheses.

The Renewal of Humanity in the Soul of the Jew

The universal goal of mankind as a whole also dominates Buber's concept of the renewal of Judaism, as he calls on the individual to renew the substance of Jewishness in his soul, and that is "the renewal of humanity" in it. This renewal is not meant to be a gradual development of new forms out of old precepts so as to accommodate traditional Judaism to the ways of modern life, as advocated, for example, by Moritz Lazarus. Nor is it meant as a rebuilding of a Jewish nationality in its ancient homeland in a new form of a cultural center to serve as a spiritual force for world Jewry, as taught by Ahad Haam. By renewal, Buber means a revolution in the life of each Jew, a complete return to the fundamental spiritual process called Jewishness, which has manifested itself in three main ideas or strivings, namely, the ideas of *unity*, *deed*, and *the future*, all directed toward humanity's final goal.

Thus, [he says] if we adhere to the innermost life of original Jewishness (*des Urjudentums*), strive for unity in our soul, purify the people, we will be contributing toward setting it free, that is, toward making Judaism free again for its work in humanity (p. 26).

Buber finds that the three ideas or tendencies are embedded in the Jewish folk character and are manifested in two directions, one as the relative, conditioned everyday life of acquisition of worldly possessions, and the other as the striving for absolute, unconditioned spiritual life. Moving in the second direction, the idea of unity is to see the whole before

the parts, the community rather than man, the universal concept before the particular object. In its absoluteness, this tendency is found in the Jew's yearning to save himself from the dualization in his soul. The idea of deed is grounded in the Jewish folk character in that the Jew is inclined more toward the moving than the sensory forms of life. He finds more substance and personality in action than in perception. That is why, from the very start, the center of Jewish religiosity is deed, not belief. Buber regards this to be a characteristic of the Oriental person in general, but finds it most pronounced in the Jew. The idea of the future is one that seeks to rise above the contingencies of everyday life and to strive for the absolute reign of justice and love, or the messianic days. It is found in the Jewish folk character, in that the Jewish sense of time is more developed than that of space, and the feeling for sound, music, and movement more than for plastic form and color.

Messianism [Buber writes] is the deepest original idea of Judaism. . . . In the realm of the future, where playful, faltering, unstable dreams may hazard, the Jew has ventured to build a house for humanity, the house of true life (p. 41).

This is not just a wish that may or may not come true. The Jew feels it as a certainty, one that must come in the end of days, in the absolute future, as it is guaranteed by every moment, by the blood of generations, by God Himself.

The realization of the three ideas in personal life is the goal of the people and of every one of its members. But the people's drive for success in everyday matters, in economic and political affairs, militates against it. Such is the inner struggle between the relative and the absolute, the temporary and the future, the desire and the deed. Buber admonishes the Jewish community to act for the reawakening of its Jewishness, to purify the people so that they may work toward the realization of their spiritual tendencies. This must be done by every Jew in his personal life, as he becomes conscious of his Jewishness and creates a "synthesis of the three ideas of Judaism in a world-feeling of the coming man." Buber does not chart any particular way of doing it, as no one can say or even surmise how the future will arise. But, he says, "You can and you must find a new appearance, a new form, a new fulfillment welded into a new world-feeling." We know it will come, though we don't know how. "We can only be prepared. . . . [And] to be prepared means: to prepare" (pp. 45-46).

Daniel

The ideas about the substance of Judaism which Buber carved out of the Jewish folk character and which, he thought, could be realized through their renewal in the consciousness of every Jew, found their uni-

versal philosophical formulation in his book, *Daniel*, published soon after his first "Three Speeches on Judaism," in 1913. Significantly, he gave to this book the subtitle *Conversations about Realization*.³ Its basic principle is derived from the first two ideas, namely, unity and deed. Realization is the work of the soul insofar as it acts toward its own unification or unity, which is reality. In *Daniel* this principle assumes an epistemological character, in that the unity is realized as an act of knowing. The human soul, like everything else in nature, is a living duality in infinite possibilities, or more specifically a polarity, such as being and not-being, good and evil, positive and negative. This is the subjective side of the world, or as man experiences it. Between these two poles there is a stream of antagonisms, contradictions, contending with each other in all things in the world. Man knows this polarity through the polarity in his own soul: the world is experienced truly as a duality. But he who masters this duality in his own soul knows the world as unity at every moment that he acts with his unified being. Man does not produce the reality of the world of things but, rather, lives it in his soul, which is realization or rendering the world real as a unity. This unity is reality. This is not to be conceived as a fusion or identification of the soul with the world, which Buber rejected at this point, but merely as an act of unification of the multiple possibilities in the world, thus making them actual. It is a *directional* act of the soul from the possible toward the actual, which Buber designates as man's "inborn direction." It "is the primal tension of the human soul which moves at times out of the infinity of the possible to choose this and nothing else and to realize it in action."⁴ This act makes the world real and, to that extent, meaningful.

Jewish Religiosity and Mythos

In his philosophy of realization, as expounded in the first three "Speeches on Judaism," in *Daniel*, and in "The Teaching of Tao," the religious aspect is hardly noticeable, that is, the center of attention is man, not God or even man's direction to God. The inborn direction spoken of in *Daniel*, particularly, is with reference to man's inner self, to the "primal tension of the human soul." In the second set of three speeches—"The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism," "Jewish Religiosity," and "The Mythos of the Jews" (1912–1914)—Buber further develops the idea of the *substance* of Judaism as that of religiosity and mythos.

3. Martin Buber, *Daniel: Gespräche von der Verwirklichung* (Zweite Auflage, Leipzig, 1919). In a letter to Buber (Sept. 22, 1911), Hans Kohn raised some doubts about the realization of the three tendencies in Judaism and hoped that the book (most likely *Daniel*), which Buber had promised to write, would clear them up. See Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, I: 1897–1918 (Heidelberg, 1972), pp. 299–300.

4. *Daniel*, First Conversation, pp. 18–19.

While in the first set he dwells on the realization of man and his world, in the second his theme is what he calls "the realization of God through man" (p. 69). It should be emphasized, as Buber later explained, that by "the realization of God" he does not mean to imply the idea of a becoming God as a metaphysical concept, an ethical idea, or any other form projected by the human mind, but the realization of God's appearance, the *theophany*, in man's religious experience as a "phenomenon of religious reality." In such divine appearances man is an active participant and, in this respect, a contributor toward the realization of the theophany (p. 4). Here, too, the goal is unity of duality. As the most representative bearer of the Oriental religious spirit, the Jew has the inner power of striving for the unity of the divine in the world. His way is that of "return" carried out as an act of decision. It is the call to return that was pronounced by the prophets and by the early Christians, and expressed in the fervor of a Hasid's prayer. Buber considers dualization under the concept of sin, and the return as an act of decision to free oneself from sin, which is a lack of decision. Hence, decision is return, and return is renewal.

The ideas of return and renewal now assume a new dimension in Buber's philosophy of Judaism, as he sees the possibility of their fulfillment only when Judaism is reunited with the land of its forefathers, Eretz Israel. The dispersion which followed the destruction of the Second Temple and, especially, the revolt of Bar Kokhba, broke the creative spirit of Judaism by divesting it of its roots in the land and in the religious climate of the Orient. The Jews became Westernized, though only by adaptation, and, thereby, subdued their intrinsic striving for the real life, which Western civilization negates and is itself devoid of. The West, Buber says, cannot find genuine life in or through its own civilization. It has the most developed knowledge but cannot find *meaning*; it has the most stringent training but cannot find *the way*; it has the richest art but cannot find *the sign*; and it has the innermost belief but cannot find *God*. Not that it lacks unity of thought, symbolic functions, or the capacity to construct; rather, "it lacks the exclusiveness of the lore of genuine life, it misses the inborn certainty of the One" (p. 59).

To the extent, then, that the Jew has become Westernized he has lost the way of his own teachings. He must now return to the way, which he can best attain by severing his ties with the West and by resuming his old connections with his ancestral land in the East. This, it must be noted, is the fundamental goal of Buber's Zionism, which we cannot consider here. The thing to bear in mind, however, is that his view of the Jewish resettlement in Eretz Israel is not an end in itself, for "the so-called 'solution of the Jewish question'" in a Jewish national territory, but for the renewal of Jewish religiosity, which is "for Judaism the only subject of unconditioned actuality, the driving power of its

destiny, the direction of its redemption, the force that, if rekindled, will give it new life, but if completely extinguished will condemn it to death" (p. 65).

Three Layers in the Act of Decision

The act of decision in Jewish teaching, says Buber, is not just ethical but, primarily, religious. "It is the religious act; for it is the realization of God through man." It is Judaism's fundamental *religiosity*, the one that realizes "divine freedom and the unconditioned on earth." It has manifested itself in Jewish religious life in three layers, through imitation of God, through enhancing His reality, and through bringing the divine presence into the conditioned life on earth.

In the first layer, to imitate God means to *become like Him*, not to *be* God. Buber interprets the verse in Leviticus 20:26, "You shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am Holy," and its commentary in *Sifra* (Holiness, 184), to mean: "'As I am separated'—that is, not determined by anything, removed from all that is conditioned, acting out of myself—'so you shall be separated'" (pp. 81, 84). Also, the statement in *Sifra*, "As God is one and unique, so your service be one," means that man's goal is God, to imitate Him in His oneness, and this means to master one's own duality and become one. In the second layer, God's reality is enhanced through man's act of decision. Buber cites Simeon bar Yo-hai's commentary on Isaiah 43:10, "You are my witnesses," as signifying "When you are my witnesses I am the Lord, and when you are not my witnesses I am not the Lord." Similarly, the verse "Render strength unto God" (Psalm 68:35) is interpreted to mean that the righteous increase the power of the rule of heaven above, and the rabbinic saying "Man is God's partner in the eternal work of creation" signifies that every human act of decision flows into the sea of divine power. In the third layer, which became manifest first in the Kabbalah, the realization of God rises to the idea of man's influence on God's destiny on earth. God's *Shekhinah* (Presence) descended into the world of the conditioned and, like Israel, wanders dispersed in the realm of things; like Israel, it wants to be redeemed, it wants to be reunited with the divine Being. But the only ones who can act toward this redemption are those who have themselves risen through the act of returning from the conditioned to the unconditioned. Of them Hasidic lore says, "Those who return redeem God."

What all the three layers have in common is "the view of the absolute value of human deed." Man's deed has something of the infinite, not in its content, but in the manner of its performance. Every act is sanctified by doing it in holiness and with unconditioned intention.

The unconditioned [he writes] is the specific religious intrinsic worth (*Gehalt*) of Judaism. Jewish religiosity is built not on a doctrine of belief and not on an ethical precept, but on a basic feeling which gives the human being its meaning, on the basic feeling that it needs to be done (p. 72).

When the religiosity is acted out in communal life, the “basic feeling” on the part of the individual becomes a *demand*, and there ensues a struggle over its fulfilment—a struggle between two leading types of men, the one who demands the truth of the unconditioned, and the other who is ready to compromise for the sake of holding power with the people. Buber considers them as “the eternal types in the history of Judaism,” namely, the prophet and the priest. Their differences became apparent at the very inception of the Jewish people at Sinai, when Aaron compromised with the people and made them the Golden Calf, while Moses demanded the full truth of the deed as he had heard it from the divine Voice and ordered the destruction of the transgressors. “In the destruction of the half and the insufficient, the proclaimed God reveals Himself as the consuming fire of the unconditioned” (p. 73).

Religiosity and Religion

The line here is drawn for all time between what Buber designates as “religiosity” and “religion.” The first, which was promulgated by Moses as the deed of the unconditioned, was turned into the second, that is, into a religion of formal laws, rituals, and ceremonies. These are necessary for the life of the community, Buber grants, but when they become restrictive, formalized regulations controlled by organized “official Judaism,” they tend to deaden the spirit of religiosity, which is “the ever newly becoming, ever newly self-expressing and forming—the astounded, prayerful feeling of man,” striving for the unconditioned. “Thus, religiosity is the creative principle, religion the organizing one” (p. 66). The struggle between the two has been the hallmark of Jewish tradition. At times, religiosity breaks out of the confines of organized regulation and elevates religion to a higher life; at other times it fades out after a brief revival; but it is always there, acting in the depth of the folk-spirit. Buber sees this process repeat itself in three decisive movements in Jewish history: in the age of the prophets who struggled against the formalized sacrificial cult promulgated by the priestly caste, in the time of the Essenes and early Christians who tried to revive the act of the unconditioned in the face of opposition from organized Judaism, and in the Kabbalistic-Hasidic teachings which sought to break through the accumulated weight of narrow rabbinic legalism.

These three movements, Buber points out, never succeeded in gaining an adequate form or sway in Judaism, even though their aim was not to abrogate the rites and ceremonies but to renew them through the

deed of true intention. Official Judaism, he maintains, was always able to have the upper hand in the contest and to suppress these movements after their brief flourishing. But Buber does not consider their lack of success in gaining power as a real failure. This is the very nature of the struggle: religiosity does not seek to gain power, for its effectiveness is not in power over the people but in the innermost intention, in the "basic feeling" that each individual has for the deed that "needs to be done." Even as it expressed itself in the three movements, religiosity is the eternal call to the renewal of Judaism.

The idea of action without aiming at success, or of a goal that does not lead to success, is a theme that runs through Buber's philosophy of Judaism in all its phases and, for that matter, in his outlook on man's destiny, in general. He distinguishes "purpose" (*Zweck*) from "goal" (*Ziel*) as contradictory concepts, the first aiming at the accomplishment of limited, conditioned tasks, whereas the second is man's overriding aim at redemption—a striving for the future to bring the infinite in the finite or, as he conceived it later, for the finite to meet with the infinite as mutually independent partners in the act of redemption. The leading men of the three movements who worked toward this goal may have failed at certain moments in history, but their deeds and their very lives continue to influence the destiny of the people. At the same time, Buber attributes their failure not to their weaknesses but to the opposition which they encountered from "official Judaism."

The Mythos of Divine Action

The same kind of opposition, Buber finds, is encountered by what he considers to be the Jewish mythos. "The history of the development of the Jewish religion," he holds, "is in truth the history of the struggle between the natural formation of the mythical-monotheistic folk-religion and the intellectual formation of the rational-monotheistic rabbinic religion" (p. 82). It goes back, he says, to the official priestly Biblical canon which sought to eliminate every vestige of myth from the extant sources, and continues to this day in the scholarly research of post-Biblical lore. The issue, as he sees it, centers on the meaning of mythos, in general, and on the concept of Jewish mythos, in particular.

Taking his clue from Plato, Buber designates as myth

an account of divine occurrence as sensate reality. Hence, one cannot call it myth if the divine occurrence is accounted for as coming from a transcendent source or as an experience of the soul (p. 78)

as, for example, in a theological exposition or in a report of an ecstatic vision. However, if God appears in sensate reality, He is a multiple being even when conceived as a monotheistic unification of a multitude of divine forces. Here the Jewish tendency toward perfect unity changes

the myth into a new form. "The cosmic, national YHVH is extended as the God of the All, the God of mankind, the God of the soul" (p. 84). He is not Himself a sensate reality whose action or passion is manifest in a sensible substance of godhood, which is the mythos of polytheism. The Jewish mythos goes beyond this concept. Its meaning is "that we must give the name myth to every story of a sensibly actual occurrence which is perceived and presented as a divine, an absolute, occurrence" (p. 85). In this connotation of the word "mythos," there seems to be no difference between Buber's view of God's role in the world and that of rabbinic Judaism. Both see His role manifest through His works. Nevertheless, the two views diverge along major lines.

Buber's Differences with Rabbinic Judaism

While Buber may argue that the "terribly rationalized Jewish monotheism" woefully misunderstands the meaning of mythos, his argument does not hold when he directs it against the traditional rabbinic view. The latter accepts fully the idea that "sensate reality is divine, but it must be *realized* in its divinity through one who experiences it in genuine living," as Buber puts it (p. 88). What rabbinic Judaism contends against is the anthropomorphism of God, which Buber, too, rejects. The real struggle of rabbinic monotheism against myth is not against those who see God's Presence manifest in nature and history, but against those who see nature as a manifestation of the divine *substance*, as a plurality of sensibly experienced gods, or even as one God splintered into endless sensate experiences. The rabbinic view is that God is an absolute, transcendent Being, The Holy One, Blessed be He, "holy" meaning unique and unlike anything in the world of man or nature. In a later stage Buber also adopted this view, but in his early phase he was still wavering between a transcendent and an immanent God, leaning towards the Kabbalistic-mystic visions of the divine manifestations on earth, which are of a substantive nature, often considered as the substance of God Himself.

Similarly, Buber's argument that rabbinic Judaism has stifled or submerged the creative act of religiosity by elevating rites, ceremonies, and the fulfillment of the commandments above religious intention is a narrowing down of rabbinism to a restricted formalism which was never the case in Jewish history, even when it was overladen with the minutiae of daily observances. Rabbinic Judaism regards these observances as fundamentally communal and, therefore, considers all laws, without exception, as preservative forces of the community of Israel, guarding against any transgressors lest they "break the fence" of communality. Indeed, Buber does not deny this, but he wants a fluid law to be confirmed in each situation by the individual for himself, as and when

he is motivated by his striving for the unconditioned. But this is exactly what "official Judaism," as Buber calls it, the Pharisees and, later, the Rabbis, opposed in the movements of the Essenes, the early Christians, and early Hasidism, namely, their individualistic trend, that would permit anyone to step out of the community and establish his own teaching. They opposed the very thing that Buber erroneously prizes in Hasidism, for example, that "every one should become a Torah, a law through genuine living" (p. 77). To be sure, the Hasidim foster genuine living according to the Torah in action as well as in intention, but not that each become a law unto himself. Hasidism did not follow the path suggested by Buber. It advocates that each one become *the* Torah, not *a* Torah, in his personal conduct, and that is why it has survived as a movement and exerted great influence on the Jewish community as a whole.

Buber's idea of striving toward a goal without success is what separates him in the main from the traditional and nationalist exponents of Judaism in modern times. According to him, one who strives toward a goal has no formed plan or even premonition of what action to take that might lead him to it. His act is a decision of his inner self out of the "basic feeling that it needs to be done." Buber calls it the act of religiosity which is free and creative, in contradistinction to the act of religion which is prescribed for a given purpose and carried out as a divine command under the aegis of the organized community. However, rabbinic Judaism does not draw this kind of distinction, whether in principle or in practice. It considers every deed as having its particular purpose and, at the same time, leading to the goal of man's realization of the divine on earth.

Neither does rabbinic Judaism share with Buber his concept of divine realization. The latter speaks of "the realization of God through man." Even after he has elucidated it to mean the realization of God's theophany, he still speaks in terms of a divine substance which permeates all changeable things in the world, as the theophany changes. Rabbinic Judaism eschews all such references which may have the slightest implication of a changing God, even in the form of a changing theophany. *Sifra* on *Leviticus* (Holiness, 174), from which Buber derives his principle of action toward the unconditioned, has a pertinent commentary on the verse "You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2) which reflects the rabbinic view: "The words 'for I am holy' teach us to mean that 'I endure in my holiness, whether you sanctify me or do not sanctify me.'" If God's holiness is a theophany, it endures as God endures, and not as man may make it so. What Buber teaches about "the realization of God through man" by imitating Him, enhancing His power, and influencing His destiny on earth, can have meaning in rabbinic Judaism only as man realizing God's will on earth.

The Individual and the Commune: A Critique of Martin Buber's Social Philosophy

ROY BRANSON

Urban-industrialism may be at a dead end, unable to stave off its chronic, organizational breakdowns, unable to throttle back its own suicidal dynamism. Even so, the technocracy cannot be overthrown; it can only be displaced, inch by living inch. It is as Martin Buber once wisely said: "Revolution is not so much a creative as a delivering force whose function is to set free and authenticate . . . It can only perfect, set free, and lend the stamp of authority to something that has already been foreshadowed in the womb of the prerevolutionary society." For Buber, the hassidic sage, that "something" was the kibbutz, and beyond it, the commonwealth of free societies formed within the dying husk of the old order, there, waiting . . . A visionary commonwealth, then: a confederated community of communities.

—Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends*¹

IT MIGHT NOT SURPRISE US THAT A WRITER defending the recent revival of American utopianism would quote the words of Martin Buber. Apologists for fellowship and communal living might be expected to draw on the work of a noted philosopher who based his entire thought on mutuality and interpersonal relationship. Buber, like such contemporary American authors as Charles Reich and Philip Slater, opposed intimate personal community to rational, technological society; saw community emerging in small, voluntary communes rather than in large bureaucratic institutions; and preferred social change through increased mutuality to revolution by means of violent conflict.

Indeed, what is surprising is the degree to which Buber's social thought has escaped critical analysis. Many forget that for thirteen years, until his retirement, Buber was Professor of Social Philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Even specialists in Buber's thought have tended to neglect his social theory. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, after editing thirty essays analyzing *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, apologized that among the 800 pages of their volume a "notable omission is social philosophy. It had been our hope to have an article written from the standpoint of Reinhold Niebuhr's social

1. Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), p. 431.

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ethics.”² This essay takes up that specific task. It does so by asking certain questions of Martin Buber’s thought that could also be asked of contemporary apologists for communes and communitarianism. When an individual’s views clash with the commands of the group to which he belongs, should he put greater emphasis on his own judgment or on that of the group? When two groups make conflicting demands on a person how does he decide which group to follow?

This study argues that Buber’s preoccupation with the importance of mutuality obscures for him man’s capacity for both distorting intimate human fellowship and for transcending it. This leads Buber to underestimate the value to society of both the norms and the structures of justice. Although this paper limits itself to Buber’s thought, such a critique of so profound a philosopher suggests that a similar judgment might be made of other contemporary advocates of communitarianism.

In answer to our questions, Buber would certainly not advise the individual to rely on a decision found in the depths of his own private consciousness, because man in isolation is not really a man. Though he might have “the sublime illusion of detached thought that he is a self-contained self; as man he is lost.”³ Neither would Buber recommend that a person automatically obey a decision of a group since many groups never draw men out of their isolation and, therefore, are merely collections of partial, unreal men.

The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each, considered by itself, is a mighty abstraction. The individual is a fact of existence in so far as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence in so far as it is built up of living units of relation.⁴

Buber’s rejection of the extremes of individualism and collectivism leads him to argue for a “genuine third alternative” that is not merely a compromise. It is called community.⁵ Here, isolated individuals become real through relation, through first “taking their stand in living mutual relation with a living Centre, and, second, their being in living mutual relation with one another.”⁶

In response, then, to the question of how seriously an individual should consider the dictates of his group, Buber would first ask how

2. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* (Illinois: Open Court, 1967), p. xvii.

3. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 168.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd Edition (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), p. 45. Cf. Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), pp. 134, 135. Sometimes he calls community “the sphere of the interhuman” and equates the collective with the social. See, *The Knowledge of Man*, edited by Maurice Friedman (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), p. 75.

much living mutual relation it fosters.⁷ Making this criterion primary leads Buber into seeing the small group with its close, personal contact as having more authority than the large group or institution in which "the pressure of numbers and forms of organization have destroyed any real togetherness."⁸ Furthermore, a social unit that uses force to maintain its unity can claim less legitimacy for its commands than a group ruled by its I-Thou relationship with God. The state has the least right to demand conformity to its rules because, more than any other social unit, its characteristic feature is force.

All forms of government have this in common: each possesses more power than is required by the given conditions; in fact, this excess in the capacity for making dispositions is actually what we understand by political power.⁹

Man being what he is, the state with its compulsion will probably always be needed, but the attitude of the individual toward it should always be one of critical evaluation or opposition, never identification.¹⁰ If the political realm is meekly allowed to govern according to its own rules "its 'natural end' is the technically perfect suicide of the human race."¹¹

Just as the individual should consider opposition to the state as his proper stance, so the individual should expect conflicts between himself and one of the parties constituting the state. In fact, it is his duty to oppose parties. In the Germany of 1930, Buber thinks a person "has a task to perform within his party if he knows himself strong and free enough to fight *in it* against the lies of party structures."¹² Three years later Buber feels that political parties have so robbed the individual of any chance to fill his proper role of opposition that joining one signals the fall from faith of the man of faith.¹³ After World War II, he again can see a legitimate place for the individual with a party and he will go so far as to say that "I have no warrant whatever to declare under all circumstances the interest of the group is to be sacrificed to the moral demand." However, the individual's job is still to oppose and "the evident absence of this inner conflict, the lack of its wounds and scars, is to me uncanny."¹⁴

Because their purposes are not directly to manage brute, physical power, some social structures do not have purposes quite so clearly opposed to the individual and his relations in community. Still, organizations such as large business corporations, cannot be identified as true

7. Martin Buber, *Pointing the Way* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 113.

8. Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, p. 136.

9. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 174.

10. Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, p. 104.

11. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 230. Cf. pp. 161-176; 208-219.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

13. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 67.

14. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 217.

communities, because they so often banish feelings and relation. "The separated *It* of institutions is an animated clod without soul."¹⁵

An institution or corporation may be fundamentally soulless, but dialogue and relation can infiltrate it.

No factory and no office is so abandoned by creation that a creative glance could not fly up from one workplace to another, from desk to desk . . . and nothing is so valuable a service of dialogue between God and man as such an unsentimental and unreserved exchange of glances between two men in an alien place.¹⁶

A factory worker can come into an I-Thou relationship with his machine and the leader of even a very large enterprise can practice dialogue when he experiences his business no longer as a machine with people as moving parts, but "as an association of persons with faces and names and biographies bound together by a work that is represented by, but does not consist of, the achievements of a complicated mechanism."¹⁷ If a directive from one of these institutions were to clash with the views of an individual within it, Buber would very likely say that the command was insufficiently sensitive to the needs of relation, but not completely inimical to proper ethical action. In most cases, the correct response of the individual would not be absolute defiance of the group's decision but its modification in the interests of creating greater mutual relationship.

Buber rejects the state and its parties because they so often thwart full-bodied exchange between persons. He censures large commercial organizations because they remain indifferent to the need for dialogue among individuals. But Buber can endure the practices of another class of groups which positively fosters his ideal of "living mutual relation"—the small organic communities. Because they are small enough for members to develop a sense of real togetherness, or because the members meet each other in relation to the "Living Center" or "Present Being," or because such groups are both small and religious, Buber considers them true communities. If the individual finds himself in conflict with the consensus of such a small organic community he should carefully reexamine his own position. He should ask himself if his disagreement is not based on repressed hostility and mistrust.

Where confidence reigns man must often, indeed, adapt his wishes to the commands of his community; but he must not repress them to such an extent that the repression acquires a dominating significance for his life. They often coalesce with the needs of the community, which are expressed by its commands.¹⁸

Buber gives examples of such small, organic groups where unity in

15. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 44.

16. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 36.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

fellowship reigns, where neither partial I's nor Thou's exist in isolation but come together in an essential We. The family, with its bodily and spiritual ties, guarantees communal life.¹⁹ So, also, students gathered around a teacher can become united in common relation.²⁰ A political group opposed to a terrorist regime can also "perceive that they are brothers and meet not as members of a party but in genuine community."²¹ Certain temporary social formations also provide an opportunity for community. For instance, for a few days after the death of its leader, a movement can be a place where its members put away their differences and "a strange fruitfulness, or at all events incandescence, of their life with one another is established."²² Or when catastrophe threatens a community and its leadership "gathers together within itself," it can become a place where "each is open to the others and they anticipate, in a brief common life, the binding power of a common death."²³

Drawing on his own Jewish tradition, Buber provides other instances of true community. These arise from common religious impulses, the example *par excellence* being Israel at Sinai. Here the common acknowledgement of Yahweh as *melekh* or king means that a "people" of covenant-partners is born. Intermittently during the period of the Judges, Israel can be seen as a true community united in its common relation to persons who bear the *ruah* or stormy breath of the divine *melekh*.²⁴ Judaism has "its classic example in the early period of Israel—the people of faith."²⁵ When the hereditary priesthood and royalty divide the functions of the charismatic leader, Israel's communal life becomes tragically divided into spiritual and political spheres. From Samuel on, the prophets protest that Israel's failure to continue the faith of its early period in the rulership of *melekh Yahweh* over all phases of life means Israel is no longer a true community.²⁶ During these periods, when Israel is more a mere state than a community, the individual prophet correctly defies the judgment of the group.

In addition to Israel at Sinai, and under the Judges, Buber sees the Hasidic circle as best illustrating community in religious fellowship. In this Jewish sect of the eighteenth century individuals gathered around

19. Ibid., p. 62; also, Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, p. 136.

20. Martin Buber, *Hasidism*, translated by Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), pp. 42, 113.

21. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 177.

22. Ibid., p. 176.

23. Ibid.

24. Martin Buber, *Prophetic Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), pp. 67, 85.

25. Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (London: Torch. Harper & Row, 1951), p. 9. Hans Balthasar believes that in *Königtum Gottes* Buber shows a preference for the period of the Judges with its charismatically administered theocracy as the ideal period in Israel's history. [Hans Balthasar, *Martin Buber and Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 37, 44.]

26. Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, pp. 67, 85.

a *zaddik*, or religious teacher and leader. His life of unique spiritual connection with God and of full relation with his fellow men drew a close circle of disciples who tried to learn how they, too, might come into fuller relation.

Outside this inner circle who lived with the *zaddik* were the adherents who continued their normal routine in the *zaddik*'s neighborhood, hoping to spread his influence into the work-a-day world. Beyond these two groups lay the pilgrims who visited the *zaddik* on holy days. All three circles found varying degrees of mutual relation with each other through their connection with the charismatic *zaddik*. The inner circle, especially, achieved "one of the strongest fusions of communion with God and communion with man known in the history of religion."²⁷ This strong mutuality precluded serious consideration of what the individual should do if his ideas conflicted with the group. With the inner circle, at least, differences simply did not arise.

When Buber searches for the ideal community, his emphasis on mutual relation and his religious heritage lead him naturally to the modern Israeli commune. In Israel, the land to which Yahweh led his covenant people, men who grow out of the "objective race-memory of such guidance of such a covenant," band together to fulfill Israel's original task of creating an exemplary life of mutual religion.²⁸ The size and quality of life within the individual commune bears traces of the small organic communities Buber describes elsewhere. Though Buber does not talk of an obvious sense of the Present Being within the commune, their whole task of settling Palestine has a transcendent, divinely ordained purpose.²⁹ Buber's ideal of the commune influencing the society around it is reminiscent of the wider task of the Hasidic circles. Indeed, his concept of Israel becoming a "community of communities" with no central coercive authority reminds one of the tribal amphictyony during the period of the Judges.³⁰

Buber's description of the individual's relation to the group gives one pause. Within the commune members engage in "remorselessly clear-sighted collective self-observation and self-criticism," which leads to an "amazingly positive relationship—amounting to a regular faith—which these men have to the inmost being of their commune."³¹ Presumably, both in the actual Jewish commune and in Buber's ideal formulation, a member can vigorously argue his position within the group, but once a majority decision has been made he is expected to conform completely.

In a utopian scheme not limited to Israel, Buber proposes the re-

27. Buber, *Hasidism*, p. 18.

28. Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, p. 10. Also, Martin Buber, *Israel and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1948), pp. 209–211. Also, Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 143.

29. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 143.

30. Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, pp. 137, 143.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

placement of the state and its government with society and administration, but expects the new social order to demand strict discipline from individual citizens.

It is essential that experts demonstrate how the wishes and decisions of the union or the association are to be carried into effect; and it is also essential that those appointed to carry out the experts' instructions should follow those instructions.³²

Buber's protests against the extremes of individualism and collectivism can only be admired. He sensitively describes the fictitiousness of the solitary individual affirming his own actions as the whole of reality. Just as unreal is the collective to which members have surrendered their individual ethical responsibility. However, Buber's rejection of the extremes of individualism and collectivism and endorsement of the small community of dialogue does not create an alternative that is a solution. Community certainly draws a person out of isolation, but as described by Buber's examples it provides the individual far too little protection against the dangers of domination by the group. On the other hand, the group has no real defense against tyranny by an individual member.³³

In several contexts that Buber describes as having mutuality and dialogue, one person enjoys a preponderance of authority. Buber uses the word "inclusion" to describe a form of dialogue where one person encompasses within himself both poles of an I-Thou relationship. He recognizes that it is possible for man to have "an abstract but mutual experience of inclusion," but says that it "is bound to leave out the full reality of his being and life." Inclusion of man's full reality is a "concrete but one-sided experience." Within inclusion "the man whose calling it is to influence the being of persons that can be determined must experience this action of his . . . ever anew from the other side." He "catches himself 'from over there,' and feels how it affects one."³⁴ Buber uses the term inclusion to describe two important dialogical relationships: the teacher and his student, and the therapist and his patient.

In an educational setting, inclusion allows the teacher to enjoy a position of authority limited only by his good judgment. His essential task is to choose for his pupils, "to give decisive effective power to a selection of the world which is concentrated and manifested in the educator."³⁵ The model for the educational community is the master with his apprentices. In this situation, Buber insists that the full mutuality of an I-Thou relationship cannot take place between teacher and student. Instead, the teacher stands at both ends of the relation; the pupil

32. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 174.

33. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of its Traditional Defense* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), pp. 42, 43.

34. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, pp. 99, 100.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

only at one. The educator so extends his concreteness into the submissive person that he can, himself, experience the student's education.

Similarly, within the inclusion of a therapist-patient relationship, the therapist holds preponderant power. "The therapist, like the educator, must stand not only at his own pole of the bipolar relationship but also at the other pole experiencing the effects of his own action."³⁶

In a public debate with Carl Rogers, Buber explained that when you are the therapist,

You are at your side and at his side at the same time. Here and there, or let's say, there and here. Where he is and where you are. He cannot be but where he is . . . you have necessarily another attitude to the situation than he has. You are able to do something that he is not able. You are not equals and cannot be.³⁷

Rogers rejects such power, insisting that the essence of a therapeutic relationship is mutuality. When a man is expressing himself "I feel in that moment his way of looking at his experience, distorted though it might be, is something I can look upon as having equal authority, equal validity with the way I see life and experience."³⁸ Confessing that "now I'm wondering who is Martin Buber, you or me," Rogers concedes Buber's point that the counselor-client relationship can be viewed from the outside as one of inequality, but

that really has *nothing* to do with the relationship that produces therapy. That is something immediate, equal, a meeting of two persons on an equal basis—even though, in the world of I-It, it could be seen as a very unequal relationship.³⁹

Buber's response is uncompromising. "Doctor Rogers, this is the first point where we must say to one another, 'we disagree.'"⁴⁰ As in the teaching relationship, the professional in psychology or psychiatry must enjoy a clear pre-eminence. As in the educational field, the novice is expected to enter as fully as he can into the relationship, unprotected by any assumption that the participants are equal, and dependent on the beneficence of the doctor's superior power. The moment mutuality interrupts healing or teaching, they dissolve into friendship.⁴¹ Buber proposes his concept of inclusion without seriously considering how its use by unscrupulous, or even merely incompetent professionals, could

36. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufman (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 179. In Walter Kaufman's translation the German word *umfassung* is translated "embracing" instead of "inclusion."

37. Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, pp. 171, 172.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Schilpp and Friedman, *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, p. 571. Ernst Simon, who is quoted there, puts it succinctly: "His other especially genuine contribution to educational insights and terminology is his doctrine of 'Inclusion.' Buber characterizes the educational relationship as an 'I-Thou' without full mutuality."

seriously warp the lives of initiates in educational or therapeutic communities.

Buber grants the religious leader similar authority. His discussion of relationships within religious communities emphasizes the personal qualities of such a leader, the "authority of the genuine charismatic in his steady response to the lord of Charis."⁴² The danger to the community from domination by a corrupt or demented enthusiast is overlooked.

Just as Buber's small organic community, ideally under the sway of an "ontic directness," could, in some cases, lead to an individual's exercising inordinate power over a group, so, also, in other instances, a strong communal sense could result in severe limitations on individual freedom. His description of the family as a place where the individual can "identify himself without regard to individual differentiation," gives to it the kind of power that Buber elsewhere condemns in the collective.⁴³ We have already seen how, even in theory, the consensus of the village commune forecloses further active opposition by its members. While Buber exhibits a justifiable concern over the threat of physical coercion by the state and the oppressive impersonality of large commercial organization, he overlooks the very real social and psychological pressures that a small, closely-knit social unit can unfairly exert on its members.

Buber not only overlooks the danger of giving too much authority to the small community, he does not see any positive function for the coercive power of large social units. He cannot recognize the importance of the individual being able to go beyond the authority of his immediate group to appeal for more equitable treatment. Similarly, in any fight to control the tyrannical tendencies of one powerful member of a group, a weak majority in a small group is denied recourse to the coercive force of a powerful outside organization.

The same problems exist for the single commune or weak majority in Buber's "commune of communes." If Buber were to reply to this criticism by saying that the existence of a community or of a community of communities should not be prolonged by artificial means, and that it should disappear when the ties of mutuality are broken, he is put in the position of supporting political anarchy.⁴⁴

Buber's failure to see a positive role for power in maintaining unity and correcting unbalanced social relationships is closely related to his insistence on divorcing the laws and justice of human society from the realm of relation.

It does matter if the organization of the State becomes freer and that of economics more equitable—but not for the question asked here about the

42. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 32.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

44. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 265–69.

real life . . . It matters most of all if the spirit which says *Thou*, which responds, remains by life and reality, if that which is still interleaved by spirit in man's communal life is subjected to the State and to economics or is independently effective.⁴⁵

Political and economic justice have significance, but the I-Thou relationship takes place independently of achieving justice. Political or economic powers should not subject the I-Thou relationship to their authority. The apodictic laws of early Israel were concerned with equitable living conditions not simply because the Israelites were expected to treat each other justly, but because equitable living conditions would bring the Israelites into direct contact with one another.⁴⁶ Since Israel's laws did concern themselves with man's I-Thou relationships they had a validity which versions of them in modern society cannot.

Provided society does not insist that the moral and legal form into which it has transformed the Ten Commandments, that that product which is an I-and-Thou deprived of the I and the Thou, is still the Ten Commandments, its activities are unobjectionable; it is as a matter of fact impossible to imagine how society could exist without them. But nothing of its vast machinery has anything to do with the situation of the human being who in the midst of a personal experience hears and feels himself addressed by the word "thou". . . . The vast machinery of society has nothing to do with the situation which prevails between the all-powerful Speaker who avoids exerting his power, and him who is spoken to; and it has nothing to do with the daring, catastrophic, redeeming situation of faith. But if society were to have the temerity to pretend that its voiceless morals and its faceless law are really the Word . . . then it would, perhaps, be too late for society to discover that there is One who rejects jailers and hangmen as executors of his will.⁴⁷

Buber does allow for exceptional uses of force in the interests of justice, but these exceptions only highlight Buber's low estimate of human law and, therefore, his inability to see a positive role for coercive power. Replying to Gandhi's charge that the Jews should not use violence to impose themselves on the Arabs, Buber says,

I do not want force, but if there is no other way of preventing the evil destroying the good, I trust I shall use force and give myself up into God's hands . . . If I am to confess what is truth to me, I must say: There is nothing better for a man than to deal justly—unless it be to love; we should be able even to fight for justice.⁴⁸

The evil against which Buber will finally use force is the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine. It is the destruction of the opportunity for a people to come into relation with each other and their God; the annihilation of a nation existing as a commune of communes, ruled by no central coercive authority, but by that spirit of fellowship commanded

45. Buber, *I and Thou*, Smith trans., 2nd edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 50.

46. Buber, *Prophetic Faith*, p. 55.

47. Martin Buber, *Israel and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1948), pp. 87, 88.

48. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 146.

by Yahweh at Sinai. The justice for which Buber will admit the rare use of force is actually fellowship, not justice translated into the human, finite laws of modern society. Buber here advocates the use of force by a fellowship community against its enemies, whatever the opinion or laws of larger social units, including the world community.

One reason Buber underestimates the relevance of norms and structures of justice to the fellowship community is the nature of his concept of evil. He complains about the Christian view of evil that talks of a rebellion against God, corrupting man's being itself. He cites the Christian theologian Friedrich Gogarten, and his characterization of man as being in a state of "radical evil." Buber insists that "a state of radical evil can be ascribed to man because God is God and man is man, and the distance between them is absolute." In other words, man may be described as radically evil only in the sense that in his finitude man is distant from God. But such radical distance does not exist between men. Therefore, "In the sight of his fellow men, of human groups and orders, man, it seems to me, cannot be properly described as simply sinful."⁴⁹ By saying that human interaction is not corrupted by radical evil, Buber challenges the importance, indeed the legitimacy, of communities' adopting laws to restrain evil.

Buber sometimes sounds as though he thinks that such laws would restrict the fulfillment of man's fundamental nature. This is especially the case when Buber identifies evil with man's basic vitality, "the evil urge must also be included in the love of God."⁵⁰ In fact, genuine Judaism, in contrast to Christianity, "allows 'the evil' to find the direction toward God and to enter into the good."⁵¹

Buber's more careful description of evil does not equate it with man's passion, vitality or will, but with man's inability to direct that will.

Evil is the aimless whirl of human potentialities without which nothing can be achieved and by which, if they take no direction but remain trapped in themselves, everything goes awry.⁵²

Even expressed in these more restrained terms, Buber's concept of evil is an important reason for his hostility to laws and government. If sin is human vitality in search of focus, what men need is not institutional restraints on their energies, but encouragement of their potentialities. To fulfill themselves men must achieve personal coherence. Evil can be purged if the human soul gives up "undirected plenitude in favour of the one taut string, the one stretched beam of direction."⁵³

49. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 77.

50. Buber, *Good and Evil*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 96, 97.

51. Buber, *Israel and the World*, p. 36. Cf. Abraham I. Heschel, "A Hebrew Evaluation of Reinhold Niebuhr," in *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought*, ed. by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1956).

52. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 78.

53. Buber, *Good and Evil*, p. 127.

Of course, for Buber, that necessary direction is movement toward the other. To remain the single one is to remain in chaos, the passions focused on nothing beyond themselves. Man must find direction through relation.

Evil is the hardness which divides being from being, being from God. The act of decision, of breakthrough . . . that is the act through which man time and again participates in the redemption of the world.⁵⁴

Elsewhere he talks of this "extreme effort of unification" as "a decisive act of decision, precisely that, therefore, which in the amazingly opposite language of religion is called 'conversion.'"⁵⁵

If one sees evil as aimless lack of personal relation, it is easy to see how the I-Thou relationship is redemption itself. Here, at last, aimless human passions and energies find their focus. Since his entire social theory is based on an experience that can overcome evil, the experience of relation, it is not surprising that Buber concludes that "no legitimate use can be made in politics or political theory of the concept of human sinfulness."⁵⁶ When relation can transmute evil into good, norms of justice seem, at best, pointers on the way and, at worst, justification for the kind of coercion that makes relation between I and Thou impossible. Where relation exists, doubts about inordinate spiritual domination never arise, and talk about man in his sinful egoism trying to dominate others sounds unreal. Arguments for the need of somewhat removed, disinterested powers to arbitrate inevitable clashes of selfish interest seem irrelevant.

That they do seem irrelevant, that Buber fails to see the sinfulness of man in all human existence, including the most mutual of human relations, leads him to put too much faith in the type of social structure that can foster mutuality, the small, fraternal group united in common relation to a central Thou. It allows him seriously to propose an Israeli communism that substitutes for the proletariat a religiously conditioned elite to bring in the new utopia. A stronger concept of evil would enable him to see more clearly the need for definite standards and institutions of justice to curb the anarchistic or despotic actions of which this or any other group of men are capable.⁵⁷

Buber allows small organic communities too much authority, not only because he lacks an adequate concept of sin, but, also, because he remains ambiguous about the legitimacy of an individual objecting, in

54. Quoted in Kohn, *Martin Buber, Sein Werk and Sein Zeit: Ein Versuch über Religion Politik* (Hellerau: Jakob Hegner Verlag, 1930), p. 308, from a course on the Tao Te Ch'ing which Buber gave at Ascona in the summer of 1924 and reprinted in Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (Chicago, 1955), p. 101.

55. Buber, *Good and Evil*, p. 135.

56. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 77.

57. Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, pp. 45, 46 and 57-59.

the name of a reality beyond the fellowship group, to the actions or policies of a group with which he is enjoying I-Thou fellowship. He never clearly answers the question: In the face of a consensus among fellows with which he is in dialogue, can the individual ever appropriately rely on his own intuition of the right (W. D. Ross), or the commands of the Universal Community (H. R. Niebuhr) or the judgments of the Ideal Observer (Roderick Firth)? Can the individual ever gain a perspective beyond even his "we" community, into what Reinhold Niebuhr called "a dimension of the eternal beyond is own existence"?⁵⁸

For Buber, an individual relying on his own understanding of an "ought" beyond his immediate I-Thou relationship would be a violation of true community. It would be to elevate the knowledge of an It above the knowledge of a Thou, a reversal of the proper priorities of existence. Nathan Rotenstreich attacks Buber for being unduly optimistic about the sufficiency in ethics of primary human relations, for not recognizing that an individual faced with ethical decisions must know a reality beyond warm interpersonal relationships.⁵⁹

Replying to Rotenstreich and other critics, Buber insists that

I still oppose "situations" to "principles," the "unclean" reality to the "pure" abstraction. The wholeness of the soul is to be authenticated just in the brokenness of the human situations.⁶⁰

Buber can never envision the individual looking down at the morality of a community from some height where universal truth is known.⁶¹

Buber cannot even admit that an individual can oppose the immediate fellowship community in the name of the competing claims of the Eternal Thou. The Eternal Thou is known, after all, only in other I-Thou relationships.⁶²

At no time does Buber admit that the demand of the Eternal Thou could conflict with the demand of a human Thou. Since full, intimate mutuality is the only route to meeting God, an individual experiencing relation with a "we" community could not possibly oppose this group in the name of the Eternal Thou.⁶³

By remaining, at best, ambiguous about man's ability ever to tran-

58. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Self and the Dramas of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 35.

59. Schilpp and Friedman, *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, p. 131. Cf. p. 122.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 722.

61. Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, pp. 84-85. Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, pp. 308-310.

62. Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1953), p. 45.

63. See Manfred Vogel, "The Concept of Responsibility in the Thought of Martin Buber," *Harvard Theological Review* LXIII (April 1970), especially pp. 179-182, on how the Absolute Thou (God) meets man only within the ordinary Thou experience and yet how the "mystery" of the relation between the Absolute and ordinary Thou leaves Buber's social philosophy obscure at a crucial point.

scend his immediate I-Thou relationships, Buber threatens the basis of man's freedom. He opens up the possibility that man will feel compelled to follow the dictates of those directly around him at a given time, that he will put too much faith in a particular human social structure and fail to judge it by universal values.⁶⁴ It certainly reduces the importance of sacrificially opposing present evil in faithfulness to those values.

Sacrifice of being is a sublime absurdity. And no moment, if it has to vouch for its relation to reality, can call upon any kind of later, future moments for whose sake in order to make them fat, it has remained lean.⁶⁵

Hans Balthasar calls Buber's philosophical method one of

ruthless simplification and clarification in which everything superfluous or inessential is mercilessly swept aside—everything that had accumulated during the centuries, everything decadent and distorted: a method of *reduction* reducing everything to essentials.⁶⁶

In several areas of thought Buber walks what he himself calls the "narrow ridge."⁶⁷ Whatever its success in other branches of philosophy (and it is, of course, considerable) the narrow ridge leads him to oversimplify complex problems in social philosophy and ethics. In epistemology, Buber rejects the extremes of subjectivism found in the Solitary One, and of objectivism found in the collective. True knowing comes from neither alternative, but from the "narrow ridge" of mutuality. Through his method of reduction Buber dramatizes the importance of knowing the intimate I-Thou relationship and makes a major contribution to epistemology. But Buber moves too directly from this insight in epistemology to proposals for society. Having decided that neither the individual nor the large group can genuinely know truth, Buber rejects the individual or the large collective groups as primary agents of moral action in society. He searches in society for an equivalent of his "narrow ridge" in epistemology and finds the small fellowship community.

Buber follows the method of the narrow ridge in his anthropology as well, with important results for his social theory. He rejects language that talks of a radical evil corrupting man's being itself, as he would even more emphatically deny evil being an alien power. He restricts evil to a lack of direction, an aimlessness and confusion. Such evil can be contained within I-Thou relations which give focus and coherence. On the other hand, Buber rejects the idea that an individual is able to perceive truths beyond his relationships of mutuality. Man is not free outside mutuality but within it. Man is truly man on the ridge between, in the I-Thou relationship. Buber refuses to accept any greater depth to man's evil or heights to his transcendence.

64. Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, p. 82.

65. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 31.

66. Balthasar, *Martin Buber and Christianity*, p. 32.

67. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 184.

When Buber reflects on ideal community for man so defined, he limits his vision to the corporate equivalent of the I-Thou relationship, the small community fellowship. He overlooks the fact that evil can be just as potent here as anywhere and that power serving more universal understandings of justice may be needed to contain the inequities and tyrannies within the fellowship group. Indeed, individual freedom with the small community may depend on the larger society exercising its force.

Buber's concentrated focus on mutuality and relationship has had an immeasurable impact on epistemology and anthropology. His analysis of the I-Thou experience provides an unsurpassed understanding of how we know. Within anthropology there is no more significant perspective of persons than man-in-relation. But when Buber makes his social philosophy revolve tightly around the small, fellowship community he often ignores the realities of society. Like many other recent advocates of communal existence, Buber remains so suspicious of the ability of either the individual or of the large group to contribute to social ethical action that he is forced to put too much confidence in the small community. Instead of the policy of reduction that Buber follows, a principle of expansion seems more fruitful; of inclusion rather than exclusion.

Faced with the question of what an individual should do if his views clash with demands of a group to which he belongs, a member cannot afford to ignore either his own ideas, or those of the group. Since sin corrupts all human institutions, he cannot accept the orders of his group even if it is a small community providing warm, intimate fellowship. A person has no choice but to compare the demands of his immediate group with the concepts of justice accepted by his society as a whole and with his own sense of what is demanded by the universal community or the moral point of view. If two social units make conflicting demands, one should not automatically reject those of the larger, more distant group (even if it utilizes physical coercion) in favor of the more proximate and personal unit. A person should take the regulations of both groups seriously. It may well be that in some instances the larger group, because of its distance, may be more interested and dispassionate in its requirements.⁶⁸ If one comes to an ethical decision by taking into account his own view of what is fair from a universal point of view, together with the demands of both the small and larger communities, it may be that he can avoid absolutizing any inevitably sinful person or group. At the same time, he can allow individuals occasionally to transcend the tyranny of the immediate and proximate and contribute creatively to the solution of social and ethical problems.

68. Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2nd Edition, vol. 2, p. 266.

A Note on Shabbat Mourning

JOEL B. WOLOWELSKY

DURING THE CONFUSING AND DIRECTIONLESS period of initial confrontation with death one can appreciate the ability of the halakhic system (and the rituals it has evolved) to help one sort out his emotions and come to grips with the reality of his crisis. And the halakhah which perhaps best epitomizes the thrust of the traditional mourning laws is *keriah*. Against the backdrop of an American "grief therapy" which calls for a deliberate non-confrontation with the stark and shattering reality of death, the ruling that one should publicly and forcefully expose his torn heart by tearing his garment gives a piercing insight into the halakhah's renitent insistence that one face the stubborn facts of life, no matter how unpleasant they may be.

In this context, the laws of Shabbat mourning—the halakhot of *avelut* on Shabbat—are somewhat perplexing. Right in the midst of a candid "halakhic grief therapy," one is told to remove his torn garments, put aside his sorrow, and return to a world of Shabbat peace. This shift cannot represent a suspension of *avelut*—Shabbat is *oleh laminyan*—nor can it be explained as a move to another stage in the mourning process, the way *avelut* follows *anninut*, or *sheloshim* follows *shivah*: witness the fact that Shabbat falls *randomly* in the *shivah* period. The seven-day span guarantees that Shabbat will be part of the normative mourning experience. Somehow, it complements, rather than contradicts, the honest approach of the weekday *shivah*.

Since *hilkhot avelut* are designed to help one deal with some of the basic questions of human existence, an insight into the purpose of Shabbat mourning may be drawn from an observation on the nature of the human personality. Man, as the saying goes, is a social being. He lives within a community, sharing his joys and frustrations with those who are common members of his fellowship of life. So strong is this dimension of the human psyche that one might argue that in a sense one has not fully celebrated or mourned unless he has done so within the context of his sodality. It is for this reason that the community plays such an important role in traditional Jewish mourning.¹

But man is also a private being.² He must retreat at times into himself, guarding his personal feelings, sharing them with no-one else

1. Joel B. Wolowelsky, "A Midrash on Jewish Mourning," JUDAISM, Vol. 23, No. 2.

2. Joseph B. Soloveitchick, "On the Nature of Man," summarized in *Shiurei HaRav: A Conspectus of the Public Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchick*, pp. 68ff.

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or with only a close few. We intuitively acknowledge this fact when we feel embarrassed at intruding on a personal situation or offended when something private is exposed for all to see. It further reflects itself in the uneasiness that one feels when paying a *shivah* call. Recognizing the intensity of the personal emotions involved (and often forcefully expressed), one somehow feels that he does not belong. (In the current American context, "openness" in conduct and dress is glorified; but one might argue that this is but an indication of the shallowness of the American drama. One senses that truly meaningful life experiences are guarded rather than exposed.)

This dialectical, contradictory nature of man naturally finds its expression in the halakhah in general and in *hilkhot avelut* in particular. On the one hand, one must tear his garments for all to see—and even the act of tearing should preferably be done publicly. Sitting *shivah*, with the obligation on the members of the community to come to console the mourner, becomes, by its nature, a public activity. The congregational *niḥum avelim* in the synagogue on Friday afternoon just before Shabbat services, is, in fact, an example of the mourner coming to the community to be consoled.

But the private dimension is not lost. Throughout the week, the halakhic requirement that one remain silent instead of greeting the *avel* offers the mourner the option of remaining in his solitude despite the people present. As long as he refrains from acknowledging the community's presence, the public experience has, in theory, not commenced. And on Shabbat the private experience becomes dominant. One of the major themes of Shabbat is withdrawal from the community.³ Thus, on Shabbat the *avel* may not mourn publicly. But he is still bound to observe *devarim shebizinah*, a private mourning known (theoretically) only to him and those closest to him. Shabbat, therefore, does not represent a suspension of mourning but a shift in the aspect of the human personality to which it speaks. Paradoxically, in real life, both aspects of mourning are experienced simultaneously within the same individual. But while contradictory feelings can be *felt* coincidentally—such is the puzzling "illogical" fact—they cannot be expressed at the same time. Thus, the halakhah gives each its separate expression. But each is an integral and indispensable part of the total mourning experience.

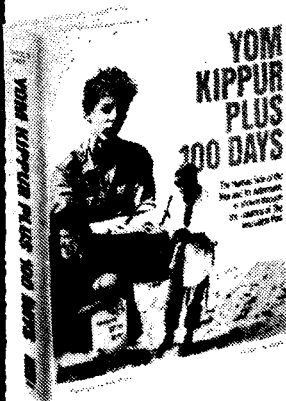
As the phrase *devarim shebizinah* suggests, this area of Jewish law is part of a more general category of halakhah known as *zniut* (modesty). Unfortunately, this concept is popularly associated with a dress code. While it may be true that one's outward appearance can express his

3. Cf. Jos. B. Soloveitchick, "Shabbat and Qedushat Hayom," summarized in *All in the Family*, NACOTE-IV Seminar Source Book, Feb. 1974.

inner feelings, *zniut* is a much broader and richer category,⁴ one that helps protect and enhance the private dimension of the human experience. In the area of *hilkhot avelut* it has only a superficial similarity with the American tendency to avoid public display of one's grief. Shabbat mourning is authentic because it comes within the context of the total *shivah*. Together with the public aspect of *avelut* it helps the mourner give expression to the spiritual turmoil within him.

4. Norman Lamm, "The Fourth Amendment and Its Equivalent in the Halachah," JUDAISM, Summer 1967.

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Beauty in the Bible and the Talmud

CHAIM W. REINES

THE SENSE OF BEAUTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE awareness and perceptions of objects, and has a great influence on man's attitude toward persons and things. Anthropologists assume that, basically, the sense of beauty has a biological function, since beauty expresses the vitality, vigor and characteristics of the species and, therefore, plays a role in the selection of a mate. But, at a higher human level, the sense of beauty is based on the aesthetic enjoyment of the object. Beauty is not, however, a property of the object in the same sense as its physical attributes, since beauty is based solely upon the external appearance of the object and marks its attractiveness. (On the other hand, this does not reduce beauty to a purely subjective judgment, since it is based on certain objective factors such as coloration, proportion, and the like.)

Besides the word *yofi* for beauty, the Hebrew language has the term *hen*, which, together with its basic meaning (gracious favor) also denotes grace and charm on the part of the object.¹ While charm is different from beauty (in that a person who is not distinguished by beauty may, nevertheless, possess charm), the two have much in common. Both denote the attractiveness of the person, the pleasant impression created by him. But while beauty resides basically in the aesthetic features of the person (e.g., the form of the body), *hen* denotes endearing qualities and depends more heavily on one's subjective attitude toward it.² One rabbinic statement says that a woman has charm in the eyes of her husband,³ a country in the eyes of its inhabitants, and merchandise in the eyes of its buyer.⁴ The essence of this statement is that whatever man calls his own and is attached to, has charm in his eyes (although to others, of course, it may appear in an entirely different light). Beauty, however, together with other qualities, contributes to the charm of a person. Thus, Esther, who apparently was distinguished by both beauty and

1. Cf. Psalms 45:3 and Proverbs 31:30, where *hen* is mentioned side by side with *yofi* (beauty). Cf. also, Proverbs 11:16 where the expression *eshet hen* (also to be found in a passage of Ben Sira quoted in *Yevamot* 63b) means amiable woman.

2. Hume (*The Philosophy of Hume*, [Modern Library, p. 48]), says that charm is inexplicable. It can, however, be attributed to certain factors such as a pleasing facial expression, congenial mode of speech, fine manners, etc. F. Schiller, in *Anmut and Wuerde*, sees in grace (*Anmut*) the manifestation of the moral essence of man.

3. Rashi comments, "Even though she is not beautiful."

4. *Sotah* 47a.

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moral virtue, was credited with obtaining grace in the eyes of all who saw her.⁵

Ancient man was deeply impressed with the magnificence and beauty of nature (the sky, the sea, the mountains), which inspired him with awe and admiration. This fact is one of the sources of religion and underlies the various myths and cosmogonies of the ancient nations, based as they are on the personification of the phenomena and forces of nature. Judaism repudiated these myths and the worship of nature. Therefore, the story of creation in Genesis lacks the mythical elements that are found in the Babylonian cosmogony.⁶ However, Biblical literature also indicates that the magnificence and beauty of nature reveal the glory of the Creator.⁷ The psalmist's exclamation, "When I see the heaven, the work of Thy hands,"⁸ he is referring to the feeling which overwhelms man when he considers the sublimity and beauty of the sky.⁹

Ancient Israel was an agricultural and pastoral people. Living in a beautiful country gave the inhabitants a vivid sense of the beauty of nature, which is amply reflected in Biblical literature.¹⁰ Taking this fact into consideration, it is not surprising that the Biblical canon contains a book (*Song of Songs*) consisting of love lyrics and passages extolling the beauty of the beloved.¹¹ As is usual in poetry, the beauty of the members of the body is described figuratively, by comparison to beautiful objects in nature and in art (the sun, the moon, plants, animals, towers, jewelry).¹² *Song of Songs* also portrays the charm of nature

5. Esther 2:15.

6. See H. Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis*, p. 15. The account of creation in Genesis, Chapter I, intends, in fact, to repudiate the polytheistic myths and the deification of nature, and to stress that nature was created by one god. For this reason it is very prosaic and lacks the poetic flavor found in other passages which preserve traces of the ancient cosmogony.

7. Cf. Isaiah 40:26; Psalms 12:2; 65:8; 104:24.

8. Psalms 8:3.

9. See G. Santyana, *The Sense of Beauty*, p. 104f. In Psalms 19:6, the charm of the sun in the sky is poetically described. Compare *Koheleth* 11:7. Also, Ben Sira extols the beauty of the sky (sun, moon, stars) and also mentions the splendor of the rainbow (*The Hebrew Ben Sira*, ed. Segal, 43:1, 11, 13). Ezekiel (1:28) also mentions the rainbow in speaking of the glory of God.

10. See S. Goldman, *The Book of Books*, pp. 6, 7. H. Gunkel, *Op. cit.*, p. 67, notes that there is no trace of the love of nature in the narratives of Genesis. The explanation, however, is simply that these narratives are concerned only with the story of the ancestors and the revelation of God in them, the chief aim being to stress the ethical-religious ideas. The aesthetic effect is of only secondary importance. (For the same reason, they contain only few details about the persons mentioned.) On occasion, however, the narratives do touch upon the beauty of certain persons, as will be discussed later in this paper.

11. *Song of Songs* 1:15, 16; 4:1, 9; 6:4, 10.

12. *Ibid.*, 1:9; 2:1, 2; 4:1-5; 5:10-15. The comparison to these objects of nature and art is apparently in regard to size (of the neck, body), color, shining quality, etc. (Cf. M. Jastrow, *Song of Songs*, p. 189, n. 10; R. Gordis, *Song of Songs*, pp. 93, 94.)

in the spring¹³ and reveals, in this way, the refined aesthetic sense of ancient Israel.

Biblical and rabbinic literature, in general, expresses a high admiration for human beauty. Thus, it was stated that after Job was restored to his former good fortune, he was blessed with three daughters of exceptional beauty, the like of whom was not to be found throughout the whole country.¹⁴ The aggadah states as much about Sarah.¹⁵ It was held, however, that Eve, the mother of all mankind, was even more beautiful than Sarah, who, compared to her, was like the ape in relation to man. The aggadah also states that Adam surpassed all of mankind in beauty, since he was the first man created in the image of God.¹⁶

When Adam sinned, he was deprived of his former beauty.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it was transmitted in weakened form to Jacob. In turn, the beauty of Jacob was transmitted (also in weakened form) to certain scholars, who were held to be distinguished by their appearance.¹⁸ The rabbis believed that the beauty of great spiritual personalities signified their wisdom.¹⁹ And they reckoned beauty among the seven things (including wisdom, strength, wealth, long life, children, and honor) which are fitting for both the righteous and for the world at large.²⁰

The rabbis also grasped the psychological effect of beautiful objects and the contribution which they make to a person's happiness and peace of mind. They said, therefore, that a beautiful woman, a beautiful house, and beautiful household articles are invigorating (literally "expanding") to the mind.²¹ The rabbis also cared for the beauty of the cities. The

13. Song of Songs 2:11-13; 7:11-13.

14. Job 42:15.

15. *Genesis Rabbah* 40:5, *Megillah* 14a. Of three other women it was said (*Megillah* 15a) that they were of exceptional beauty—Rahab (Joshua 2:1), Abigail (1 Samuel 25:3) and Esther.

16. *Baba Batra* 28a, *Leviticus* 20:2. The aggadah apparently assumed that the beauty of Adam was a reflection of the divine glory (the beauty of the *shekhinah*). Compare the Biblical statement (*Exodus* 34:35) that when Moses descended from the mountain his face shone. (Cf., *Cassuto Commentary to Exodus*, p. 313.) Also, according to the Babylonian epos, Gilgamesh was the ideal of human beauty (A. Jeremias, *Babylonische Dichtungen*, p. 22).

17. *Genesis Rabbah* 12:6.

18. *Baba Batra* 15a, *Baba Mezia* 84a. The rabbis distinguished, however, between beauty in the normal sense (based on proportions, etc.) and the "splendor of countenance (*hadrat panim*)" which is of a spiritual character and adds more to the prestige of the possessor than does mere beauty. Rabbi Jochanan was not distinguished by "splendor of countenance," although he was beautiful.

19. *Kohelet Rabbah* 8:1.

20. *Avot* VI, 8; Jerusalem Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 11:3; *Tosefta*, *Ibid.*, 11:8.

21. *Brakhot* 57b. (Cf., Joseph Akin, *Sefer Hamusar*, ed. Bacher, p. 80.) The three objects mentioned (wife, home and household articles) belong to the immediate environment of man, on which his mood and happiness largely depend. The same source also says that pleasant sights, sound and smells are refreshing (*meshivin*) to the mind. In reference to the latter statement, Rabbi Samuel Edels (*Glossaries to the Talmud, ad loci.*) explains that these pleasant sensations divert the mind from the perpetual

halakhah, therefore, forbids the planting of certain trees in the vicinity of a city because they might detract from its beauty.²² They also urged the selection of beautiful objects for religious worship (e.g., the *lulav*).²³ Similarly, it was stated that the man who recites the prayer at a fast should have a pleasant voice.²⁴ The Talmud praises the beauty of the Second Temple as rebuilt by Herod, saying that it was built of marble stones of different colors, reminiscent of the play of waves in the sea.²⁵ (This simile indicates the role of association in aesthetic appreciation.)

The halakhah enacted that when one sees a beautiful creature (man or animal), he is supposed to say, "Blessed be He who has such creatures in His world."²⁶ A story is told²⁷ that the patriarch, Rabbi Gamliel, was once so impressed by the beauty of a passing (gentile) woman that he exclaimed, "How great is Thy work, Lord."²⁸ The rabbinic legend also says that Rabbi Akiba was so much impressed by the beauty of the wife of Tarnus Rufus (the Roman official with whom he had frequent discussions about Judaism) that he expressed sadness that such a creature was destined to rot in the earth.²⁹

Beauty was much prized in ancient Israel in matters of matrimony. Thus, the Biblical story relates that when Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, was sent by his master to choose a wife for Isaac, he decided that the girl who would come to the well and offer a drink to him and to his camels should be his choice.³⁰ In accordance with the character of his master, Eliezer judged that the girl should be distinguished by kindness

worries and dissatisfactions of life. Reflecting the medieval view, however, this rabbi interprets the first statement in the sense that beautiful objects draw man to the pleasures of the world.

22. *Baba Batra* 24b.

23. *Mekhilla*, ed. Friedman, 37a.

24. *Taanit* 16a. Compare the words of Rashi, *Brakhot* 6a, sub *vinah*, "the synagogue where the congregation says the hymns in a sweet voice."

25. *Sukkot* 51b.

26. *Brakhot* 58b, *Avodah Zarah* 20a. A special blessing was also instituted for when one sees blossoming trees in the spring, "Blessed be He who left no void in His world and created good and handsome trees in His world" (*Brakhot* 43b; *Code* of Maimonides, *Brakhot* X:13). One source (*Avot* III, 7) says that when one is repeating his studies while walking by the wayside and interrupts them by saying, "How beautiful is this tree," it is considered as if he had committed a sin deserving the death penalty. This statement means that, when engaged in study, one should be so absorbed in it that one should not pay attention even to a beautiful object. However, the same statement also indicates that beautiful trees were admired by scholars at the time.

27. *Avodah Zarah* 20a.

28. *Psalms* 104:24.

29. *Avodah Zarah* 20a. The mishnah (*Arkhin* III, 1) states that when one makes a vow to offer to the sanctuary an amount equivalent to the worth of a certain individual (if he were a slave), this amount differs depending on whether the individual is beautiful or ugly. The halakhah apparently adapted this distinction from contemporary usage in the slave market, since a beautiful slave was more prized than an ugly one.

30. *Genesis* 24:14.

and helpfulness.³¹ The same narrative adds, however, that Rebecca was also beautiful.³² It seems, therefore, according to this narrative, that though the first importance in the choice of a wife should be assigned to morals, beauty also counts.³³

It may be assumed, however, that, at least in early Biblical times, beauty and not moral virtue played the decisive role in the choice of a wife. Thus, it was stated that Rachel was beautiful.³⁴ (Presumably, for this reason, Jacob preferred her to Leah.) A story is told that a certain man vowed not to marry the daughter of his sister, as was the custom of the time.³⁵ When the case was brought before Rabbi Ishmael, he realized that the reason why the man refused to marry the girl was that she was ugly. Rabbi Ishmael provided her, therefore, with the means of beautification³⁶ and brought her before the man and asked him if he would vow not to marry this one (as she looked then). The man answered in the negative, and the vow was, therefore, annulled. The story adds that Rabbi Ishmael wept and said, "The daughters of Israel are beautiful but poverty makes them look ugly."³⁷ Rabbi Akiba was even of the opinion that a man may divorce his wife if he finds a woman more beautiful than she.³⁸ This opinion, so paradoxical at first glance, is explained by considering that when a man falls in love with another woman, he will no longer love his wife and their marriage will be disrupted. Since this usually happens because the other woman is more beautiful, Akiba mentions this reason specifically.

In ancient Israel it was customary at a wedding for those assembled to dance around the bride and to extol her beauty.³⁹ The school of Shammai was of the opinion that every bride should be praised according to her actual qualities, but the school of Hillel held that every bride should be praised as "beautiful and charming." When the school of Shammai objected that in case the bride is a cripple, such praise would be a lie, the school of Hillel argued that when a man buys bad merchandise, one

31. Cf. the comments of Rashi and Nahmanides *ad loci*.

32. Genesis 24:16.

33. One rabbinic source (*Avot de R. Nathan*, ed., Schechter, p. 6) cites the parable of a king who delegated someone to engage for him a certain girl who appeared to be "beautiful, pious and of nice deeds," but who was later discovered to be an adulteress.

34. Genesis 22:17. Cf. further, Deuteronomy 21:11; II Samuel 25:3; Psalms 45:3.

35. Mishnah *Nedarim* IX, 10.

36. According to rabbinic tradition (*Baba Kama* 82a), Ezra instituted the practice of requiring peddlers to go to the small towns and sell cosmetics to the women. The rich ladies of Jerusalem were allotted huge sums for this purpose (*Ktubot* 66b).

37. Amos (8:13) speaks of the "beautiful girls of Israel."

38. Mishnah *Gittin* IX, 10.

39. One source (*Psikta Rabbati* 94a) cites the parable of a king who gave his daughter in marriage and a friend advised him that a man should carry her on his shoulders and show her to those assembled so that they could admire her beauty. This presentation was apparently adapted from contemporary usage.

is nevertheless supposed to praise it before him in order to spare him vexation.⁴⁰

At the time of the Second Temple, it was customary, on the fifteenth of the month of Ab and on the Day of Atonement, for the maidens of Jerusalem to dance in the open in order to show themselves to the young men, who chose their brides from among them. Those who were of good family said, "Young man, look at the family, since a wife is only for the sake of bearing children," implying that a woman of good family would have children of high spiritual quality. Those who were beautiful said, "Young man, look at beauty, since a wife is only for the sake of beauty." Those who were neither from a good family nor beautiful said, "Take a wife for the sake of heaven,"⁴¹ (meaning for the sake of the moral purpose as ordained at the beginning of creation). Rabbi Hiyya combined the first two views, saying that a woman is only for the sake of beauty and of bearing children.⁴² This is at variance, however, with the view expressed in the story of creation, and that is shared by the rabbis, that the woman was designed to be a help and companion to the man.⁴³

The Wisdom literature objected to the view that the chief merit of a woman consisted of beauty. Instead, it pointed out that only a woman who possesses wisdom and moral virtues is of real value to a man.⁴⁴ Beauty is like an external ornament which adds to the charm of a person when the latter is also distinguished by inner moral and intellectual qualities; otherwise, it is not fitting to the person. "Like a golden ring in the snout of a pig is a handsome woman who lacks wisdom."⁴⁵ The

40. *Ktubot* 16b, 17a. The school of Hillel was apparently of the opinion that in order not to disturb the joy of the bridegroom and cause him distress, one may deviate from the truth. Cf. Ch. W. Reines *Be-oholei Shem*, p. 236. In favor of this opinion it may be said that "beautiful and charming" is just a conventional phrase, which no one takes at face value.

41. *Taanit* 31. The Mishnah (*Taanit* IV,8) omitted the words of the beautiful maidens (that a wife is for the sake of beauty) and states just the opposite, "Do not look for beauty, since beauty is vanity." This version is apparently based on a later correction, which wished to accommodate the text to the view expressed in Proverbs 31:30, which states that beauty is vanity. (See below.)

42. *Ktubot* 59b. This view may betray Greek influence, since a similar view was found among the Greeks. Cf. E. Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage* II, p. 30.

43. Genesis 2:18. The rabbis (*Yevamot* 63a) assumed that these words meant specifically the housework of the woman. They concluded from Rabbi Hiyya's statement (that a wife is only for the sake of beauty and of bearing children) that he does not agree with the view of the Mishnah that a wife has the obligation to do certain kinds of housework. It is also said of Rabbi Hiyya (*Yevamot* 63) that he had a bad wife who caused him much vexation but that, nevertheless, he brought her presents. When Rab was astonished by this behavior, Hiyya said, "It is enough for us that they (the women) are rearing our children and saving us from sin."

44. Proverbs 11:22; 19:14. Also, Rabbi Akiba stated (*Sabbath* 25b) that a man who has a wife of good deeds may be considered rich. This statement is based on the view of Proverbs (19:14) which says that a wise wife is worth more than an inherited estate.

45. Proverbs 12:4.

hymn in praise of a wise and virtuous woman even depreciates beauty, saying that charm is deceiving and beauty is vanity.⁴⁶

In general, beauty plays a significant role in human relations.⁴⁷ It affords aesthetic pleasure and, consequently, disposes one favorably toward the individual and arouses respect.⁴⁸ In antiquity, therefore, good looks were considered an asset for men in public life.⁴⁹ This was especially true of the king, since a comely appearance would enhance his prestige among the people. Thus, it is said in a hymn in praise of a king, "Thou art the most beautiful of men."⁵⁰ It is said of David that he had beautiful eyes and a fair complexion,⁵¹ a fact that apparently attributed to his popularity. It is also stated of Absalom, who rebelled against David and aspired to become the king of Israel, that he was a man of great beauty.⁵² The halakhah states that the high priest should be a man of comely appearance⁵³ for his beauty would enhance the splendor of the worship in which he officiates. The rabbis also held that the members of the Sanhedrin (the high court) should, preferably, be tall and of a comely appearance, in order that the people should have the proper respect for them.⁵⁴ However, a protest is expressed in Biblical literature against the human tendency to judge a man according to his external appearance. It is stated that man looks to the eyes, but the Lord looks to the heart.⁵⁵ These words indicate that the external appearance does not always accurately express the character of a man and may be misleading, since an individual who is not distinguished by good looks and does not make a favorable impression may be of a high spiritual quality.⁵⁶ Of the so-called "servant of the Lord" it is stated that he was not distinguished by beauty and a comely stature, and, there-

46. Proverbs 31:30. Ben Sira also warns against falling into the trap of a beautiful woman, and he stresses the value to a man of an intelligent and virtuous woman. At the same time, however, he lavishly praises the value of a beautiful wife, saying that she is an ornament in the house like the sun in the sky (*The Hebrew Ben Sira*, ed. Segal, 25:24; 26:18f.; 36:19, 22; 40:27).

47. "Good looks are a possession of great value in human relations; they are the first means of establishing goodwill between men." Montaigne, *Essays* (London, 1962), p. 199.

48. Even in medieval moralistic literature the view is expressed that a comely appearance reveals high spiritual qualities. (Cf. *Moznai Zedek*, ed. Goldenthal, pp. 123, 124.) Cf. above and notes 18 and 19.

49. Cf. Montaigne, *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

50. Psalms 45:3. It is also said in a medieval legend about a certain man from humble beginnings who, by his wisdom and skill, managed to become pharaoh of Egypt, that he was also beautiful. (*Sefer Hayashar*, p. 31.)

51. I Samuel 16:12, 18.

52. II Samuel 15:25. It is also stated in the same narrative that Absalom had a daughter of great beauty.

53. *Yoma* 18a. *Yerushalmi*, Ibid. I. 3.

54. *Sanhedrin* 17a. Rashi, Ibid. sub *marah*.

55. I Samuel 16:7.

56. Socrates is reported to have been ugly.

fore, was not appreciated in accordance with his worth and was despised.⁵⁷ There is a story told in which the daughter of the Roman emperor Hadrian once said to Rabbi Joshua, who apparently had an unattractive appearance, that he presents "precious wisdom in an ugly dish." Joshua, who was distinguished by his wit, retorted that precious wine is placed in a vessel of clay. The emperor's daughter objected that there are some learned men who are also distinguished by their beauty, to which Rabbi Joshua replied that if these men were ugly, they would be wiser still.⁵⁸

Ugliness repels people who are, therefore, inclined to insult an ugly individual. This fact is expressed and condemned in a rabbinic story, which tells of a certain young scholar (Rabbi Simon Ben Elasar), who returned from the academy and was riding his ass along the beach. He was elated because of his success in his studies. An exceedingly ugly individual approached him and greeted him in the respectful way customary in greeting a scholar, "Hail (*shalom*) to you, master." The young scholar said, "How ugly you are; perhaps all the inhabitants of your city are so ugly." The man replied, "Tell that to the master (God) who made me,"⁵⁹ the lesson of the story being that the human dignity of an ugly individual should be respected, since he is not responsible for his unattractive appearance and the one who insults him insults the Creator.

In sum, we find that Biblical and rabbinic literature reveals a refined aesthetic sense and a genuine admiration for beauty in ancient Israel. The rabbis recognized the psychological effect of beautiful objects on the human soul. Beauty played an important role in the social life of the times, since it enhanced the prestige of the individual and was, therefore, considered an asset for high office holders (the king, high priest, members of the Sanhedrin). But Biblical and rabbinic literature also recognized the conflict between the natural propensity of man and the demands of ethics, since people are too greatly impressed by external appearances and are, therefore, inclined to underestimate or even to insult an ugly individual. It was stressed, therefore, that a person should be judged, not according to his outward appearance, but by his moral and intellectual qualities; and that human dignity should also be respected, even in an ugly individual.

57. Isaiah 53:1, 2.

58. *Taanit* 7.

59. *Taanit* 20; *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* (Schechter), First Edition, Chapter XII.

Theology in Twilight

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THE CENTENNIAL OF THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE (1875–1975) precedes the Bicentennial of the United States (1776–1976) by a year. The temptation to link the former with the latter is more than incidence, more than pride. Rather, it is occasioned by retreat in time, by the recall of events deeply inked within memory of a people inescapably united with America: 1492, for example, marks the expulsion of the Jews from Spain; 1492 records the discovery of America, a home for the expelled wanderer. More than a home is America for the Jew: independence, freedom, equality are his bounty; alike with all the citizens of the land.

Most surprising, as most cherished, in his new home is President Washington's letter to the Jewish community of Newport, R.I., as follows:

The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

George Washington's letter was prophetic of the revolutionary emancipation of European Jewry. From President Washington through President Lincoln, through the Roosevelt presidents, to President Ford, American Jewry is the most blessed diaspora Jewry in the world. Currently, while the "cease-fire" is honored, America is resupplying Israel with the latest weaponry to sustain Israel against her everlasting enemies—Egypt and Syria.

The enjoyment of freedom by corporate American Jewry is transcended by the progressive unfoldment of Judaism in America. The Enlightenment period affected Judaism in America considerably, via German Jewry. The centennial that salutes the existence of the Hebrew Union College (the oldest rabbinical school in America) has witnessed the emergence of a four-fold Judaism in America (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform), rather than the one unlabeled Judaism in the rest of the Diaspora. The Hebrew Union College, in particu-

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lar, at the end of World War II (as the result of the destruction of East European Jewry) became the world's leading institution of progressive Judaic thought.

Reform Judaism, per se, evolved progressively in three stages: from amorphous (Orthodox) Judaism to (1) a "religion" shrunk to an Ethic persuasion (Pittsburgh Platform); (2) a flowering of Ethic-Ethnic tandem Judaism (Columbus Conference); to the current crystalization of (3) a religio-cultural civilization, concentrated in the continuum of the people of Israel.

Differently stated: Judaism, to be viewed as a religion and introduced to Jerusalem just as Christianity is to Rome, as Islam is to Mecca, and as Buddhism is to Benares, is to fail both Jerusalem and Israel. For Judaism and Israel are integrated as one; peculiar unto itself. Thus, when we come to Christian Rome we come to a pagan people converted to Christianity; when we come to the Islamic world we witness a pagan world converted to Allah; when we come to India we see a people diverted from their former life-way to the postulates envisioned by Buddha. Israel was never a pagan people; Judaism was never a faith introduced as a catalyst to convert faithless Israel to the faith of Judaism. Says Nahum Sarna, of Brandeis University: "Israel was a monotheistic people from its very inception and the whole of Biblical literature is a product of the monotheistic environment."

Abraham, the first Jew, so-styled, is the first showcase of Judaism. From Patriarchs to Prophets, from the sages of old to the scholars of our time, the two—Israel and Judaism, the ethnic and the ethic—have developed integrately, interrelatedly. There is no Judaism, but the Jew is the bearer of it; there is no Jew, but a living witness to Judaism. Israel and Judaism are the Siamese twins of the culture of a people; to sever one from the other is to incur the death of the one and the other. The recent experience of Russia is a case in point. During the tenth century, Russia was converted from paganism to Christianity. About a millennium later, Russia exiled Christianity. Like a cloak, the state put religion on and took religion off. Such an occurrence is inconceivable in the State of Israel, or to the Jews in the Diaspora, because Judaism is as native to the Jew as is breath to a living being. Judaism is witness to a life rooted in the persuasives of the good life. Judaism is the history of a people; its genesis, growth and development. To deny it all is to deny life's finest fruition.

In this minuscule skeleton-survey of the heritage of Israel, one thing is most conspicuous by its absence: theology. Not evasively, adroitly, or accidentally, but solely and chiefly because "theology," as such, that is, theology that deals with creed, dogma and doctrine, inexorably binding upon a religious people, is unknown to classical Judaism. An experience with the late Louis Ginsberg, then Professor of Talmud at the Jewish Theo-

logical Seminary, New York, is helpful. In our friendly chat, the newly published work, *Jewish Theology*, by Dr. Kaufman Kohler, then President of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, engaged our interest. Ginsberg finally dismissed the book cavalierly by asking sharply: "Since when do Jews have a theology?" This dismissal of theology in Judaism by the leading Talmudist of his time is worthy of note. Is Judaism a religion resting on theology, based on creed and dogma, in the bosom of the miraculous and supernatural, rather than a way of life that reason commands and faith supports? It is at this crucial juncture that Dr. Ginsberg's pointed question: "Since when do Jews have a theology?" falls into place. For where there is no theology, there is no religion.

This helps us to see how some leading lights of Jewry did wonder whether Judaism could be truly labeled a religion. Dr. Ginsberg was not the first in hinting at it. In the Jewish world of letters, where reason and faith met in conflict, reason prevailed. Maimonides, in his *Guide To The Perplexed*, and Spinoza in his *Ethics*, are witnesses to it. No wonder that, as early as the 15th century, Elijah del Medigo of Padua remarks, in his *Examination of Religion*, that the essence of Judaism is "Deed and not creed."

Notable in a similar approach is Moses Mendelssohn, first to carry the torch of Enlightenment to Diaspora Jewry. Says he, "Judaism is no revealed religion in the usual sense of the term, but only revealed legislation, laws, commandments and regulations which were super-naturally given through Moses."¹ No less helpful in setting Judaism in a broad, rational frame is the view of the late, equally distinguished, modern-minded Martin Buber:

I really don't know, (says Buber), I really don't know what "religious people" means. I must confess that I don't like religion much, and I am very glad that in the Bible the word is not to be found. I even think that nothing in the world is as apt to mar the face of God as religion is, if it means religion instead of God. What the Bible says is not religion but holy. To be holy means simply to let everything, social, economic, political life—not only private life—all life be subjected to the kingship, the kingly rule of God. And I think it essential that man should not only have the truth in his private life, but as a member of his party, too. And it seems rather more difficult.²

In this mini-liberal approach, Progressive Judaism adventures a dialogue, an encounter with Progressive Christianity, in an effort to mitigate the menacing inroads of Secularism. Have we come to the parting of the ways—religion divorced from life—or is there still room for common ground, for faith and reason? Are we witnessing the *coup-de-grace* of the dying moments of religion, or is there still a heartbeat of recov-

1. Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, *A History of The Jewish People*, pp. 589–599 passim.

2. Malcolm L. Diamond, *Preface to Martin Buber*.

ery in the dynamism that refuses to be blind to the mystery of life and the universe? The urgency of the religious pulse in the civilized life of our day is adumbrated by some cryptic comments that follow: Said American master-architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, "How long can civilization without a soul last? Science cannot save us; it has brought us to the brink. Art and religion, which are the soul of civilization, have to save us."³ Dr. Nathan M. Pusey, former President of Harvard University, when he addressed the thirty-ninth annual convocation of the University of New Delhi, India, while attending the third assembly of the World Council of Churches in the United States, said:

There is world-wide worry among university people that a conjunction of material need and scientific triumph has set loose in contemporary society a force which now poses a serious threat to human values. Surely there is reason for concern.⁴

The late Premier David Ben-Gurion concludes the triad when he said, "Science in isolation cannot suffice. It needs moral force to direct it."⁵ And here is the last telling word:

A secular Judaism is impossible to maintain for much longer, and a religious Judaism also has decreasing hope for durability. Similarly, Christianity is more and more hollow, and the rising number of church goers is no more significant than the rising number of Reform synagogues. In both cases, the religious message is empty and the Temple is primarily a site for dancers and bingo games. Nor is secular Christianity going to survive.

Thus reported England's Labor Government, in a survey of its traditional Blue Laws.

Have we come to the twilight of religion, and we know it not?

3. *New York Times*, 6/7/57.

4. *New York Times*, 11/26/61.

5. *New York Times*, 9/18/63.

The Symposium "Where Do I Stand Now?": Con and Pro

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

The symposium "Where Do I Stand Now?" in your Fall 1974 issue, has raised some questions in my mind which I hope you will deem worthy of a reply in the pages of JUDAISM:

1) Are rabbis "intellectuals" by your definition?

2) If, as I suspect, your definition of "intellectual" applies to rabbis (some rabbis may be more—or less—"intellectual" than some of your symposiasts), why is not even one "Reply" by a rabbi included in the "Where Do I Stand Now?" symposium?

3) I also note that among the twenty-six symposiasts there is not even one "scholar, writer and academician" who is either a scholar of Judaism or a writer—creative, or of criticism of literature—writing primarily on Jews and Jewish life. What were your reasons for not inviting scholars of Judaism and some writers of "The Jew as American Culture Hero" phenomenon to participate in the symposium?

3) In your introduction to the symposium, you refer to the 1961 *Commentary* symposium "Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals." In the introduction to that symposium, Norman Podhoretz, accusing himself by excusing (as I see it) wrote: "Assuming—perhaps foolishly—that a Jew with a definite religious commitment of any kind would regard the sort of question we wished to ask either as irrelevant to him or as self-evident answerable, we did not invite any representatives of the younger religious intelligentsia." Was this the rationale of your omission, not to invite rabbis and Judaism scholars and creative writers and critics focusing on Jewish themes to participate in the symposium?

5) *Commentary* has come a long way toward what you might call "Jewish identification" since Milton Stein-

berg, in 1949, wrote: "Since it is largely negative Jews who do get into *Commentary* pages, the impression is fostered of Jewish negativism within American Jewry, indeed a nihilism, greater than it is in fact." Am I wrong in concluding that the symposium "Where Do I Stand Now?" is rife with expressions of "Jewish negativism within American Jewry, indeed a nihilism, greater than it is in fact?" For example, do you think Percival Goodman's experience with most of the lay persons sponsoring the fifty synagogue buildings he designed is typical? Do you think Robert Langbaum's serving as president of his local temple, "an institution in which I so little believe," as he puts it, is representative of presidents of synagogues and temples generally? Do you think the contributions to the Symposium which you describe as "deeply moving personal testaments" should not rather be described as expressions of mawkish sentimentality or "historical sentimentality," as Robert Langbaum, who considers "organized Judaism barren," puts it?

6) I am glad you included among the symposiasts four graduate students preparing for the rabbinate and careers of Jewish scholarship. After all, it is to them and their peers that, as you say, we look for future leadership. However, is it not incongruous, in a way, to give the word to four students and not to even one of *their* teachers in the Seminaries and Jewish Studies Departments of the universities they attend?

7) I think (and hope) I am not of those who are unduly concerned with "what will the Gentiles say?" However, I know that non-Jews and Jews doing research and/or writing on American Jews (articles on Jewish themes "sell" magazines...) look for material to such symposia as "Where

Do I Stand Now?" Do you think that, in the absence of Jewishly knowledgeable symposiasts in an *expertise* sense, this symposium will not reinforce the sense of negativism and the notion that "the essence" of Jewishness has nothing, or little, to offer to modern Jews? Do not the titles of some of the symposium's contributions express the "Jewish negativism" which Milton Steinberg deplored as having been exaggerated by *Commentary*? I am referring to such captions as *The Jewish Malaise* (p. 403), *From My Alienated Vantage* (p. 408), *A Private Mystique* (425), *A Last-Ditch Hope for Judaism* (p. 438), *I Am A Jewish Atheist* (p. 422), as well as to oblique statements and frankly smart-alecky remarks that abound in the Symposium? Do you think that these *malé vos man redt* effusions uttered, it would seem, on the spur of the moment and with little reflection (I do not expect this "reflection" from the student contributors but deplore its absence in Leonard J. Fein and Leo Pfeffer, also in Elihu Katz, who knows much better than he wrote to you) can contribute, as you put it with a quotation, "to complete the task, we are not permitted to desist from?"

In taking stock of the 1961 *Commentary* symposium, Milton Himmel-farb wrote, in *Commentary* of May 1961 (reprinted in his volume of essays, *The Jews of Modernity*:

Most of the symposiasts have a smattering of Jewish kitchen culture—a peculiar position for intellectuals to be in. Yet most are not backward about declaring flatly what Judaism is or is not. . . . The symposium produced a scientific discovery of some moment. Dynamic psychologists tell us there is a birth trauma, and some would also say there is a weaning trauma. Ned Polsky [one of the symposiasts] has disclosed the Bar Mitzvah trauma, and has shown how serious it can be.

Would you agree that Mr. Himmel-farb's comments on the 1961 *Commentary* symposium adequately—really more than adequately—fit the JUDAISM 1974 symposium?

TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN
New York, N.Y.

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

I want to congratulate you on the splendid collection of essays on "Where Do I Stand Now?" It is a truly memorable symposium. However, I am surprised that not a single Rabbi appears. There must be a reason. Are you perhaps planning another symposium in which Rabbis of various age groups might express their feelings on how they stand and where they may have stood a decade or so ago?

Evanston, Illinois DAVID POLISH

THE EDITOR replies:

We have reprinted, in full, Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin's long letter attacking the symposium, "Where Do I Stand Now?" which appeared in the Fall 1974 issue of JUDAISM. First, because of our high regard for her as a scholar and thinker whose contributions have graced the pages of JUDAISM more than once, and second, because she articulates, with characteristic warmth, some of the issues involved. The vigor of her onslaught is all the more remarkable, since she, herself, is aware at many points of the answer to the questions she propounds.

I do not know which of the two hackneyed metaphors is more appropriate here, pushing against an open door, or beating a dead horse. Being a rabbi and a Jewish academician myself, I was aware, even before receipt of her letter and the complimentary note from Rabbi Polish, that both callings contain a high concentration of intellectuals. The reason for not inviting participation from these two categories in the symposium is obvious,

or should be. We wished to sample the standpoints of those Jewish intellectuals who do not have a vested interest in Judaism and its preservation. This is not to suggest, even remotely, that there is anything wrong with having a vested interest. But our concern was with the attitudes of the generality of American Jews, not with a specialized group whose life-work lies in this area.

Let me cite an analogy. If I were interested in surveying the role and impact of classical music in the life of the American people today, I would not turn to orchestra conductors or opera singers for an evaluation, intrinsically important as their ideas might be in another context.

Dr. Rosmarin is very unhappy about the Jewish ignorance characteristic of American Jewish intellectuals today. I share her sorrow, but am unwilling to pretend that the facts are otherwise. The low level of Jewish knowledge is not characteristic of the ideal Jewish community, only of the real one. For many years, I have been quoting to my colleagues, *beshem omro*, an observation of the veteran American journalist, Raymond Clapper, so much so that, in a recent journal, the writer attributes the statement to a rabbi! Clapper said, "Never overestimate the knowledge of the people or underestimate their intelligence." Having granted this much, let me withdraw it in part. I disagree with Dr. Rosmarin on the level of Jewish knowledge represented by our symposiasts. She herself refers to Leonard J. Fein, Leo Pfeffer and Elihu Katz. Many of the other writers may be less technically equipped, but they are by no means Jewishly ignorant, aside from being perhaps more representative of the American Jewish community.

I am astonished not a little that, as a veteran editor, Dr. Rosmarin assumes that only these twenty six symposiasts represented in our pages were invited. Actually, several literary figures were asked, along with others.

For a variety of reasons, some of the invitees declined and several who accepted did not come through. *C'est la vie*—many are called, but not all choose to answer.

It need hardly be pointed out that Dr. Rosmarin's attack on Norman Podhoretz and her quotations from Milton Steinberg and Milton Himmelfarb are entirely irrelevant to the issue.

I certainly do not agree with all the points expressed in the symposium, which include what seemed to me to be errors in judgment and blind spots. I was not interested in having twenty-six variations on my own views, nor would I be likely to get twenty-six willing collaborators on such a project. It is worth repeating again and again—particularly because this is not the dominant concept today of an editor's function—that JUDAISM has no line except that it has no line. Its columns have been open to contributors of all schools of thought who deal with the religion, philosophy and ethics of Judaism in a responsible manner and are able to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

It is not altogether irrelevant to point out that since the publication of the Fall issue of JUDAISM we have received requests for the magazine in bulk, in some instances going as high as hundreds of copies. These are from college teachers, rabbis and adult education leaders, who evidently find here much of significance about American Jewish life today.

That Dr. Rosmarin does not agree with many attitudes expressed in the symposium is precisely one of its basic values. Negativism, alienation, ignorance, ambivalence—all these attributes characterize important and potentially significant elements of American Jewry today. But when this symposium is contrasted with the earlier one, it becomes clear that a great deal of progress toward a more positive identification with Jews and Judaism has been registered in the intervening fourteen years. On balance,

the judgment I pronounced in my introductory essay is both more temperate and more true than Dr. Rosmarin's diatribe:

These contributions from some of our people's most gifted offspring may well prove to be a mirror of the future, bringing assurance that all is not lost and that no inexorable *fatum* has descended upon us. To be sure, the symposium is not the result of a scientifically weighted poll, so that any generalization is easily challenged. Nonetheless, one cannot escape the strong impression that while assimilation, often automatic, unconscious and impersonal, continues to go forward with ten-league boots, the contrary process of re-identification with Jews and Judaism is also a reality . . . the entire history of the Jewish people bears testimony to the importance of the "Saving Remnant," rather than the solid and stolid majority. Time and again, the apparent end of the road has emerged as a new turning.

Whether this judgment on the symposium is valid the reader must decide for himself.

New York, N.Y.

ROBERT GORDIS

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A Reaction to Tanenzapf

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

Sol Tanenzapf's article (Summer, 1974), *Heschel and his Critics*, mentions several times that my criticism is based on Maimonidean assumptions. The reader is therefore left with the impression that I am a "Maimonidean." Nothing could be further from the truth, as any one may easily find out by reading my *God, Man and History*, which was published in 1959, several years prior to the publication of my criticism of Heschel in *Tradition*, in 1964.

While I am not at all a "Maimoni-

dean," I have gained from Maimonides an understanding of the very serious problems that are implied in any attempt at making statements about God. Whether those problems arise from Greek philosophy or not is irrelevant. They are very valid indeed. No one may speak meaningfully about God today who ignores those problems. But it is exactly what Heschel does.

Tanenzapf apparently completely misunderstood my own position in that critique of Heschel. I was rather puzzled by such phrases as, "Berkovits proposes to solve the problem . . ." and "The weakness in Berkovits' solution is . . ." I was offering no solutions of any kind. I was only a critic, showing that Heschel wrote as if those problems raised by Maimonides did not exist at all, that one may freely ignore them.

In general, I fear that Tanenzapf misses the main trend of my criticism. This comes to its fullest expression as he discusses my statement that empathy with God's suffering is a Christian concept. In this connection he writes:

That Heschel's formulation has parallels in Christian thought is obvious. But it is to be hoped that Jewish thinkers are secure enough in their commitments to Judaism that they can reexamine those aspects of Judaism which have been given special emphasis in Christianity.

As if I had criticized Heschel for being "too" Christian. The truth is that I was showing that what makes sense within the frame of reference of Christianity is utterly meaningless in the context of Judaism. Now, since Christianity maintains that Jesus is not only "very God" but also "very man," it makes excellent sense to demand of a good Christian that he feel the suffering of the "very man" that his God was on earth. But to say that the prophets of Israel felt the sorrow of the God of Israel as their own, that

they shared in the inner life of God, is to use words that have no meaning for me.

It is just not true that empathy with God's suffering, as understood and described in detail by Heschel, is an aspect of Judaism which received "special emphasis in Christianity." The "Suffering Servant," to whom Tanenzapf makes reference to prove his point, is certainly not that aspect of Judaism that was given "special emphasis in Christianity." On the contrary, it illustrates the point of essential differences between Judaism and Christianity. The suffering servant of Judaism has nothing in common with the crucified Man-God of Christianity. Nor is it true that Jews try to overlook the concept "because it is so fundamental to Christian belief."

The truth is that in the Bible of Judaism there is no "Suffering Servant." What we have is *Eved Adonai*, God's servant, and God's servant suffers. He is very human indeed, nothing but human. Therein lies his whole dignity and distinction. The concept is essential for the understanding of Judaism, indeed it is the key to the understanding of the history of Israel, especially in this holocaust world. But it has nothing to do either with Heschel's theology of pathos or religion of sympathy.

An attitude of generous respect towards Christian beliefs is fine with me. But it must not darken our understanding of basic concepts and fundamental differences.

Skokie, Illinois

ELIEZER BERKOVITS

RABBI KOOK AS A MYSTIC

Review-Essay by BEN ZION BOKSER

Mishnato Shel Harav Kook (Hebrew). By ZVI YARON. World Zionist Organization, Dept. of Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora.

THE JEWISH PREOCCUPATION WITH MYSTICISM goes back to the very inception of Jewish history. Gershom S. Scholem has characterized Jewish mysticism as a post-Biblical phenomenon, but it is significant that in defining the nature of mysticism he quotes approvingly the citation of Thomas Aquinas who saw the mystical experience as alluded to in Psalm 34:9: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." He adds the following comment: "It is this tasting and seeing . . . that the genuine mystic desires."¹

It is not only in the Psalms, those songs of yearning for God and of ecstatic joy in experiencing His reality, but throughout the Bible that we find the testimony of the mystic's encounter with God. What was the nature of the encounter out of which the pioneers of Jewish spirituality, from Abraham to the last of the prophets, went forth to call their people and the world—to seek God and pursue His ways? Their own testimony is that it was an encounter with God. Reason and contemplation played their part, no doubt, but it was primarily a mystical experience, in which the spirit was ignited with a new passion, and a new light illumined for them the mystery of existence. In post-Biblical Judaism, there were mystic communities, such as the Essenes, the Kumran sects, the Therapeutae, and the early Judeo-Christians. And despite rabbinic discouragement, many, including members of the academies, followed the vagaries of the "chariot" speculations to probe the mysteries of the divine throne, of what "is above and what is below, what was before and what after." In the writings of the Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism became a highly esoteric doctrine whose primary goal was to resolve the paradox of an infinite God bringing to birth a world of finitude, and it sought to do so by positing a series of divine emanations, or manifestations, the *sefirot*, which formed a transition between the *En Sof*, the Infinite One, and the world of material existence. Later, Jewish mysticism changed its focus and became a popular movement in Hasidism.

1. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1946), p. 4.

BEN ZION BOKSER is rabbi of *The Forest Hills Jewish Center* and adjunct professor at *Queens College, N.Y.*, where he teaches *Jewish mysticism and Hasidism*.

The most vibrant renewal of Jewish mysticism was in the late chief rabbi of Palestine, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1885–1935). The great passion of his life was the yearning for God, for the ecstasy of those moments when he felt the embrace of the divine light, though he was constantly beset by frustration when he could not altogether convey the ineffable grandeur of what he had envisioned. These feelings pervade all his writings, his poetry, his essays in religious philosophy, his spiritual diary, his commentaries on the liturgy, and his extensive correspondence. Only a small portion of the more than thirty volumes which comprise his literary legacy have been published, but they clearly reveal him to have been, in the words of Scholem, “a splendid type of Jewish mystic” (*Major Trends*, p. 18).

Rabbi Kook's mysticism has, however, certain singular features. It is suffused by the presence of God, but it leaves intact a human zone where man's initiative remains efficacious, where human reason is given its due scope of competence. In most mystical systems man is submerged by God; man's greatest goal is to reduce his strivings and submit to the divine rhythm. Even Jewish mysticism generally tends toward this one-sidedness. In the Kabbalah and in Hasidism there is an acknowledgement that the world is in need of *tikkun*, perfecting, and that this can be effected by man, but man's role is not to work directly on the redress of the world's evils. It is, rather, to perform acts of penance, to cultivate a deeper piety which, it was thought, would stimulate a responsiveness in the heavenly realm. But the final *tikkun*, the real change, was to come through the activating of the divine forces.

In Rabbi Kook's system, man was challenged to play a direct role in the process of *tikkun*. Man's highest service of God is to identify with the divine rhythm which we encounter as the creative force reverberating in the universe. It is in response to this that the physical world has come into being, and it is in response to this that man is stirred with a moral passion. In acting out that passion he becomes a creator, a builder, a co-worker with God in the unfolding drama of life. This perception made Kook into a supporter of all progressive forces seeking to direct the world toward justice. It is also this which made him, in the domain of Jewish life, a supporter of the Zionist effort to rebuild Erez Yisrael and to pursue an active program of Jewish redemption. Similarly, Kook saw the need for rationality as part of the human contribution in understanding and perfecting the order of the world. Indeed, he cautioned that mysticism by itself was perilous, and could lead man to all kinds of vagaries and superstitions, unless it were subjected to strict controls, and he defined those controls as “moral and rational refinements.” Only where there has been such preceding refinement, he warned, will those touched by the mystic

experience "grasp the full and dominant demand of this illumination for the perfection of the moral, social, intellectual and practical world."²

Rabbi Kook is known in the Jewish world for his staunch defense of Zionism and for the sympathy he showed to the *haluzim* despite their general estrangement from Jewish traditional moorings. But his teachings concerning God and man, concerning the nature of the human spirit in its yearning for spiritual authenticity, remain a closed book waiting to be deciphered. Even the Hebrew reader often finds himself baffled by Rabbi Kook's unique style, which abounds in poetic imagery, in all kinds of allusions to Rabbinic, Kabbalistic and Hasidic teachings. Like all mystics trying to communicate the ineffable, he uses a profusion of words but can only hint at his meaning, without giving it precise formulation. A contribution to the elucidation of Rabbi Kook's mind for the Hebrew reader has now been made by Zvi Yaron in his volume *Mishnato Shel Harav Kook*.

II

Yaron's book succeeds in portraying for us the deep, mystical element in Rabbi Kook's thought and it also makes clear the singular quality of Rabbi Kook's mysticism. His ideas can be traced readily to Kabbalistic-Hasidic precedents. The culminating goal of all his strivings is *dvekut*, cleaving to God. He saw in all things divine "sparks" which it was man's duty to liberate by subduing the obstructing "shells" of the negative forces that surround and seek to thwart all life. He defended the concept of the *zaddik* as it emerged in Hasidism, as the necessary intermediary upon whom the divine influences flow with profusion and whose vocation it is to transmit those influences to the people of lesser spiritual sensibility who look to him as their master. At the same time, Rabbi Kook felt free to criticize the Hasidic world as it had crystallized into a religious establishment. He found that it had lost its original quest for inwardness, and the kind of piety which it inspired was not different from the formalized, soulless conformity to ritual that was practiced in the general Jewish community. Here are his words:

Even Hasidism, which began as a force to ignite the divine light in its profusion and brightness in every heart and mind has changed its character, and it now follows the path of ordinary religiosity, so that it is no different from the way of the *mitnagdim* . . . Therefore, everything is in decline.³

He was critical of rabbinic scholarship in his time because it placed its focus solely on the study of Talmudic dialectics and neglected the literature of the Kabbalah and Hasidism, but he also sought

2. "*Derekh Hatehiah*," *Hanir* (Jerusalem, 5679), p. 3.

3. *Igrot*, Vol. I, Letter 132.

to stimulate an interest in the writings of the medieval Jewish philosophers such as Saadia, Maimonides, and Halevi, and, what is even more significant, he included the writings of modernists in all fields of religion and ethics. Indeed, he advocated due attention to secular studies as well, because any truth revealed about the world, from whatever source, is another illumination of God's wondrous world and should be embraced by the religiously sensitive person.

As a mystic, Rabbi Kook found that the highest truth comes to man in moments of divine inspiration, which partake of the nature of prophecy. But he held that the sensitizing factor which equips a person to be an authentic recipient of such inspiration is intellectual and moral development. Inspiration in itself may, indeed, beget blurred and misleading images in the medium receiving it. A critically needed control against such distortions was reason and morality. It is pertinent to note that in maintaining this somewhat unusual position, Rabbi Kook had precursors in the history of mysticism. This was essentially the position of Plotinus and, in Jewish mysticism, of Abraham Abulafia and his great master, Maimonides. As the result of Ahad Haam's misleading essay "*Shilton Hasekhel*," Maimonides has generally been regarded as a super-rationalist, but as Leo Strauss and others have shown, this is, in fact, a misinterpretation. For Maimonides, prophecy is essentially a mystical experience and it can reveal truths not reached by reason; a pre-requisite for prophecy is rational and ethical, as well as imaginative, perfection; and the highest goal of life is not to know through reason but to go beyond it: to meditate on God so as to effect *dveikut*, cleaving to Him.

The relationship of reason to the mystical experience in Rabbi Kook's thought is suggested by Yaron but it is not clearly defined. Much better described is Rabbi Kook's attitude to the practical world: his support of Zionism, his advocacy of greater productivization among Jews by a return to manual labor and agriculture. He even decried the overconcentration by the Jew in the old world on a "spirituality" which had made him one-sided and alienated him from the practical aspects of reality. He sang endlessly of his great love for the Jewish people and yearned for its return to new vitality in the physical and cultural realm. But his view was never parochial. He was also concerned with the larger world, and the redress of its social, moral and spiritual deficiencies was part of his dream for the future redemption.

III

There are certain subtleties in Rabbi Kook's thought which are often missed in Yaron's exposition. Thus, Rabbi Kook frequently expounds a traditional concept in an altogether new direction, and then quotes a classic text which appears to confirm his meaning. But in such

instances he has also expanded the sense of the text to bring the two meanings in conformity. Yaron takes the text in its conventional sense, and then shrinks Rabbi Kook's meaning back to the conventional level.

The following is a good illustration. In an essay, "*Avodat Elohim*,"⁴ Rabbi Kook contrasts the service of God as it is generally conceived of in other religions, and as it is understood in Judaism. In other faiths, the divine service focuses on the adoration of an exalted divine Being, while in Judaism the focus is not on a divine Being, who is altogether beyond our reach, but on the ideals which reflect the impact of His providential action in the world. After characterizing the concept of divine service among other peoples, he writes (p. 144) :

This is not the concept of the divine service among Jews, which expresses an eternal love for divine ideals, to cultivate them, to enhance them, to rise with them and through them. "He reveals His teachings to Jacob, His laws and judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with other nations. He did not inform them of His commands" (Psalms 147:19-20).

Yaron paraphrases this passage but interpolates terms of his own, thus: "What is distinctive about the divine service in Judaism is the tendency to cultivate divine ideals, that is, *the commandments and the laws given by God in His Torah*, as it is written, He reveals His teachings to Jacob . . ." (p. 64).

In the light of Rabbi Kook's general position it appears dubious whether we may readily equate divine ideals with the commandments and the laws of the Torah. Elsewhere in the same essay Rabbi Kook writes:

As long as the concept of divine service is directed toward a *distinct* Being, stripped of the perception of divine ideals embodied within the very essence of the service . . . we have not yet progressed from the juvenile conception . . . But the mature conception which is distinctive in Judaism . . . is the elaboration of divine ideals, to cultivate them, to refine them and to attempt to realize them in the nation, in man, and in the world . . . This is the enlightened knowledge of God (p. 145).

In another essay which is part of the same collection, Kook is more specific. Here he identifies the divine ideals with the passion for justice: "The sublime goal that divine justice shall prevail among us and in the world—this is our mighty over-all goal . . . This is the basic significance of the love of God hidden deep in our heart and soul." The *mizvot* have a role to play in this phenomenon but *in themselves* they are not to be identified with the divine ideals. Rabbi Kook phrases it thus: "All the actions, all the *mizvot*, all the customs are only so many vessels which bear some particular light from this mighty, higher light, and it is to the extent that the vessels are sturdy and pure, and their purpose discerned . . . that the light is enhanced" (p. 124). In

4. In *Eder Hayakar* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1967).

Midot Harayah he states simply: "We must embrace the divine ideals, and we must always strive to realize them in life, in thought and in action, in the individual and in the community, with our mightiest and most constant dedication."⁵ Elsewhere, he identifies the divine ideals with "pure morality and a heroism for higher things."⁶ He also referred to this as "the higher Torah"⁷ and as "the higher moral Torah."⁸

It is obvious that his citation of Psalms 147:19-20 ("He reveals His teachings to Jacob . . .") refers to this larger perception of the divine service. Indeed, in one instance he put it explicitly: "When we refer to the term 'Torah' we must avoid all that delimits this all-inclusive concept . . . The Torah can then appear to us as the soul of (the world's) culture, the leaven of its development and unending progress."⁹ In another passage in the same essay he characterizes Torah as that influence which stirs our culture toward "science (*mada*), equity and justice" (p. 28). Rabbi Kook, in essence, demands of us the imitation of God, to enter the rhythm of the divine vibrations that pervade existence and stir it toward the desire for life's perfection. Torah and *mizvot* emerge as aids in cultivating this sensibility, and when they function in their authenticity they fulfill this role. But the two are not equivalent.

Rabbi Kook's concept of a "higher Torah" transcending the Torah and the commandments as conventionally understood bears an echo of earlier teachings in the Kabbalah and Hasidism. The Zohar, in one instance, puts it thus:

Come and see: A person wears clothes which all can see . . . But the worth of the clothes is in the body robed in them, and the worth of the body is in the soul that abides in it. So it is with the Torah. It has a body, the commandments of the Torah, and they are robed in garments, which are narratives concerning matters of this world . . . The truly wise . . . concern themselves only with the soul, the essence of all, the real Torah.¹⁰

The Maggid, Dov Ber of Mezerich, holds that the real essence of the Torah cannot be known by man in his present state of spiritual development, but it will be disclosed in the messianic age.¹¹ Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi speaks of a higher Torah which emanated from the divine wisdom and then "descended and became robed in our physical Torah, whose goal is the performance of the commandments."¹² Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobel called for a type of Torah study which

5. "D'vekut," p. 4.

6. *Orot* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1963), p. 127.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

8. "Derekh Hatehiah," p. 5.

9. *Ne-edar Bakodesh*, p. 22.

10. *Zohar*, III, p. 172a.

11. *Magid Devorov Leyakov*, Section 6.

12. *Tanya*, "Iggeret Hakodesh," ch. 19.

stripped the text "of the gross garments in which the Torah is robed." Reaching for the true essence of the Torah, its soul, one would no longer see in it a catalogue of particularized precepts, "the pure and the impure, the fit and the unfit." The Torah would then reveal its hidden light by which a person can find his way to God.¹³

Yaron's tendency to reduce the scope of Kook's ideas is similarly illustrated in his treatment of the relationship between Judaism and other faiths. In one of the longest chapters in the book, dealing with the relationship between the Jewish people and the nations, he cites copious quotations in support of the thesis that, according to Kook, Jews have a vocation to bear witness to true universality, to influence the world toward the recognition of the oneness of God, and to build a world order in the image of that unity. He repeatedly affirms Rabbi Kook's call to raise our love so that it may truly embrace all people. *But he mentions not a word concerning Rabbi Kook's attitude toward other faiths which is truly one of the most remarkable aspects of his thought.* In one instance he quotes a passage in which Rabbi Kook declares his belief in the legitimacy of diverse paths to God but reinterprets it to mean an advocacy of respect for other nations!

It will be instructive to cite some of Kook's teachings on the subject, which are totally ignored by Yaron. Like Solomon ibn Gabirol who declared in the poem, "*Keter Malhut*," "Your glory is not diminished because of those who serve another beside Thee, for the goal of all is to reach Thee," Rabbi Kook believed that all religions disclose a divine dimension. Even idolatry, he held, "has its source in holiness."¹⁴ In one passage he declared:

Conventional theology assumes that the different religions must necessarily oppose each other . . . But on reaching full maturity the human spirit aspires to rise above every manner of conflict and opposition, and a person then recognizes all expressions of the spiritual life as an organic whole . . . When the light of Judaism becomes manifest in the world, and overcomes with decisive resoluteness its obscurities, resulting from the failure truly to know itself, there will at once be revealed to the world the precious attribute of unity, which harmonizes all forces as a unitary phenomenon, at the same time leaving untouched the distinctive essence of each. The spiritual world in all its expressions will then be integrated into an organic whole, so that even this realm which abounds in the conflict of the different religions will be pervaded by peace and light. There will remain a decided difference in the qualities of the different faiths and in the values of one as compared with another. From the entire ensemble there will automatically become manifest the central essence which is at the heart of all faiths."¹⁵

13. *Yismah Lev, Shabbat, Pesahim*.

14. *Arplei Tohar*, p. 23.

15. "*Talelei Orot*," *Tahkemoni* (Berne, 1910), pp. 17f.

The most significant statement on this subject appears in one of his letters:

Concerning the other faiths . . . the aim of the enlightenment which emanates from Judaism is not to absorb or destroy them, as we do not aim at the destruction of the world's different nationalities, but to perfect them and to stimulate them toward higher development so that they may free themselves of their dross, and then they will automatically be joined to the root of Israel . . . This applies even to pagan faiths, and certainly to those faiths which are in part based on the light of Israel's Torah.¹⁶

Yaron ignores this vital subject altogether. He quotes the last passage but paraphrases it, thereby slurring its significance. Here is how he phrases it: "The aim of Israel is not to destroy but to perfect and to remove dross and to serve as a good influence on the nations. This approach applies even to pagan nations, 'and certainly so to religions partly based on the light of Israel's Torah'" (p. 307). This paraphrase blunts Rabbi Kook's thought and obscures the most striking aspect of his teaching.

We have cited several illustrations of Yaron's treatment of Rabbi Kook's thought. They are characteristic of his method throughout this book. The best parts of this study are the many quotations from Rabbi Kook's original writings, but the overall level of the book leaves much to be desired. Yaron touches on the vast domain of issues and ideas which comprise the literary legacy of Rabbi Kook. But the frame into which he puts them is narrow and the result is a warped portrayal. It is precisely Rabbi Kook's originality, his daring departure in unprecedented directions, that one is eager to have depicted, and this is the very element one misses in Yaron's study. Nevertheless, we welcome Yaron's book as a popular study which will stimulate additional interest in Rabbi Kook as a person and as a thinker.

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A Guide To What Is Funny in Life

Notes On An Endangered Species And Others. By MORDECAI RICHLER. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York, 1974. 212 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by WILLIAM NOVAK

THE JEWS OF CANADA are fond of pointing out that their communal experience generally lags about a generation or so behind that of their American counterparts. This pattern, it is commonly believed,

can somehow protect them from the various problems that have plagued the Jews of the United States; after all, the argument goes, we can see the future and make the necessary alterations to avoid the pitfalls which await us. Whether or not the argument makes good sense, the facts which it is based on are entirely true. While the sons and daughters of immigrants were crowding the public colleges of New York between the wars, and growing in-

16. *Igrot*, Vol. I, Letter 111.

creasingly distant from the European heritage of their parents, large numbers of European Jews were still arriving in Montreal. Standing closer to their immigrant origins, Canadian Jews have had a far easier time than their American cousins in remaining a distinct entity within the general culture. And in Montreal, where two separate cultures co-exist, the Jews have been left with little choice: assimilation, even if they had wanted it, was simply not an available option.

The Jewish community of Montreal has produced several notable poets, including Leonard Cohen, Irving Layton and the late A. M. Klein, but only one novelist of stature has emerged thus far. So it is Mordecai Richler who is primarily responsible for the literary image of the Montreal Jewish experience. In half a dozen novels he has repeatedly explored the lives of lower-middle-class Jews and their more successful offspring, chronicling in minute detail the old neighborhoods, the enormous gulf between the generations, the local color and legends, the summers in the country, and that great symbol of success and escape: McGill.

For the past two decades Richler has been an expatriate living in London, so most of his portraits of Montreal life are drawn from his boyhood experiences of the 1930's and 1940's. Canadian readers have responded favorably to these accounts, and one novel, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, has become something of a cult item.

Until recently, Richler's reputation was confined to Canada, with a small following in England, but the publication, in 1971, of *St. Urbain's Horseman* changed all that. This novel incorporated the various elements which had become

standard fare in Richler's fiction: swift action, stock comic characters, and a wild humor which frequently crossed the tight Canadian boundaries of good taste. The new novel, it was generally agreed, signalled Richler's maturation, and his arrival as a significant novelist in the English language. At the same time, it brought him that most elusive prize hungered after by every Canadian artist: recognition and acclaim in the United States.

Notes On An Endangered Species is the first American publication of Richler's collected **nonfiction**, and it consists of some fifteen articles, essays and reviews which have appeared in a variety of periodicals in Canada, the United States and England. Not surprisingly, the essays are cut from the same cloth as the novels and, like the novels, they tend to be mostly satirical, rarely reflective, and occasionally poignant. For the most part they are about Canada, contemporary Jewish life, or the author himself. But whatever the immediate subject at hand, Richler's general concern is the popular culture of our time.

By allowing himself to become a main subject of the book, and an object of some ridicule in the process, Richler softens the edge of his attack on other subjects. In a rambling essay entitled "Why I Write," he skims hither and yon over the surface of the writer's world, complaining cheerfully of the many false starts and failures, and the nagging notion that nobody really cares about contemporary literature anyway. "Given any rainy afternoon, who wants to see Doris Lessing fully clothed for forty bob when you can actually see Jane Fonda starkers, shaking it for you and art, and leaving you with sufficient change for a half-bottle of gin?" Coming

at last to the question at hand, Richler, in the end, can only feebly echo the response of George Orwell to the same question: I write, he concludes, mostly out of sheer egoism and aesthetic enthusiasm.

Having got that out of the way, Richler then proceeds to less weighty matters. He is particularly concerned about the temptation of the writer to make himself into a character, and is highly critical of the writer as public figure. But here he protests too much. In his fear of being tainted by the sordid business of ego gratification, Richler goes to such lengths to acknowledge his own ambition and assert his own modesty that the whole process backfires, and he ends up taking himself far more seriously than he had intended. Pretense is his greatest enemy, and he will risk self-righteousness to expose it.

He writes movingly of his early days in Paris, when he was a member of the lost generation which came of age in the 1950's. He regards himself and his peers as having been sandwiched between the glories of a recent past (the culture of Paris between the wars) and the sham of the imminent future (the celebration of everything new and experimental). The previous generation is satirized in the Paris memoir of one Gordon Craig, who hobnobbed around the city for close to half a century, dripping with self-importance, name-dropping to the very end. The younger generation is scolded for thinking that its rebellion is somehow original or significant. We, too, had sex without love, Richler recalls, but we did not blow it up into a statement of revolution, alienation, or anything other than what it was: simple lust.

Despite his restraint, and his obvious desire not to be overcome by his fondness for nostalgia, Richler is sentimentally pulled back to his

youth. He returns to it constantly in his fiction, as well as in several of these essays, conveying his frustration with a past that is quickly fading and being overtaken by a younger generation creeping up to usurp the place of its elders. A friend at the airport exclaims in shock: "Me, forty? My father's forty!" No longer one of the bright young men, full of promise, Richler finds himself in a new role, one in which he is *expected* to produce, to leave his mark. The most obvious escape is to retreat, if only temporarily, into the carefree days of another era, which he does with consistent ease, grace, and intelligence.

Closer to home, he encounters the anticipated alienation from both country and kinsmen. Identifying with each through the popular culture, he writes about Canada's hockey team, its comic book heroes, the centennial celebration, and the cultural effects of the new nationalism. Within the Jewish community, he turns his attention to the Catskill resorts, the Jews in sports, and a book about the Jewish community of Canada.

For the satirist, these targets are all broad enough to hit blindfolded with a slingshot, and it is to Richler's credit that he approaches each subject with some sympathy, and often with originality. He can be very funny, even mocking, but is usually careful to avoid cruelty or condescension, preferring, instead, to write through the eyes of social realism. He is continually drawn to the absurd: extremist political movements; Clark Kent, whom he regards as less the mild-mannered reporter than the archetypal Canadian middle-class Wasp (Superman's creator being from Toronto); "Lip" Pike, the first professional baseball player, who earned a few dollars on the diamond only weeks after his

bar-mizvah in 1864; or a description of how one Canadian Jewish historian might have written about the Kennedy assassination, disregarding everything except the details of Jewish life and biography in the story.

Naturally, the essays are highly relaxed and informal, and they use a kind of literary reportage which imitates some of the techniques of fiction. Brisk and pithy dialogue emerges on every page, and there is action and movement galore. In a brief tour of Catskill resorts we are whisked along from one vignette to the next, encountering human beings who are inexorably reduced to caricatures: the resident hypnotist-psychologist, the single man-on-the-make, the people at the dinner table and in the lobby. Richler effectively captures the tone of the place, and then weakens his case by hedging his bet. Somebody, in passing, refers to the plethora of mink wraps at Grossinger's, but Richler feels compelled to point out that the man does so "fondly, and with that sense of self-ridicule that redeems Grossinger's and, incidentally, makes it one of the most slippery places to write about." The temptation, he adds, is to present Grossinger's as a cartoon, to make the people who go there to appear grotesque. After all, he points out, these are the people who are constantly being satirized and mocked in Jewish fiction (including his own, he might have added); they are "sitting ducks for satire," and to write about them in that way is not to tell the whole truth.

Quite so. But, of course, you cannot have it both ways. Either you jump into the fray with all your journalistic sensitivities turned up to nine, and all your humorous sensitivities lit up and activated, knowing full well that this is only one version of the truth, or,

in a different process altogether, you stand back, and try to get under the admittedly grotesque surface to what lies beneath. Richler, it seems to me, goes most of the way along the former route, and then, at the critical point, pays lip service to the other process. Attempting both versions of the truth, he succeeds wholly in neither. As the satirist, he is too kind and restrained to be as effective as he could be. As the intellectual, he knows there is more to the story, but fails to tell us what it is. Sympathy for one's subjects is one thing, but it is not the same as insight. And, so, we are left with little more than a vaporous account of a certain phenomenon that wavers between the fine humor he sometimes achieves and the reflective seriousness which is also within his powers.

That Richler can be serious and analytical—without necessarily being weighty—is made clear in the opening essay, a penetrating analysis of the James Bond phenomenon. With keen wit and a sharp tongue, he peels away the top layers and exposes a hideous social fascism underneath, complete with a strong dose of anti-Semitism. In the British edition of this book, there is what may be Richler's finest essay, a sensitive overview of the Holocaust, and its effects on Western culture and sensibilities, and on Jewish life all over the world. Its omission from this volume is, to say the least, unfortunate.

What is left in *Notes On An Endangered Species* is too lacking in substance to make the collection work as a book. As magazine components, these articles were probably received with delight by various editors, and in their original contexts they undoubtedly served as fresh and original treatments of

the day's less urgent problems. But as chapters of a book they lack the backbone to perform their new task. Again and again, the critics speak of Richler's comic talents, often overlooking the limitations that this kind of surface humor must inevitably impose. Once in a long while, a comic voice arises for whom we are willing to forego all other considerations. Richler is not that voice; he is more a guide to what is funny in life than an orig-

inal source of humor. And so, inevitably, he promises more than he can deliver, and teaches us, in the end, very little. As he said in an interview when *St. Urbain's Horseman* was published, "nonfiction, however bedazzling, still deals only with the grammar of the times; fiction, with the essence."

WILLIAM NOVAK was for five years editor of *Response*, and is now associate editor of *Moment*.

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